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bus AND coach

PROFESSIONAL

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EXCLUSIVE



Test drive on the new Edinburgh busway



NEWS
ANALYSIS

Birmingham
opts for HOVs

FEATURED IN
THIS ISSUE...



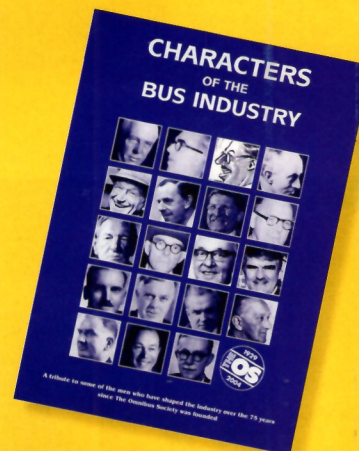
Municipal sale
Councillors put
Bournemouth Transport
on the market.



Barrow investment
Stagecoach's new Solo
fleet enters service.



Debate move on
Frye tells operators it's
time to embrace
wheelchair access.



Bus characters
Special festive subscription
offer - see page 63.



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29 BRUSH STROKES

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Comment



Bus lanes have been around in Britain for the best part of 40 years, and have always been controversial. But in these days of a heightened awareness of the importance of partnerships between bus operators and local authorities it is disturbing that one of Britain's biggest cities, Birmingham, is reviewing the operation of some of its bus lanes.

One has been suspended, on a route where the major operator has just invested a large sum of money in new articulated buses. At the moment it looks unlikely to be reinstated. It's a move which in the wider transport world could undermine the trust which is needed between operators and local authorities if partnerships are to work.

There is a genuine problem with the perception of bus lanes, particularly in areas where traffic is queuing and relatively few buses are seen to be using an adjacent bus lane. Motorists often see bus lanes as simply reducing road capacity, rather than being a means of moving greater numbers of people using limited road space.

Local politicians will almost always seek to do whatever plays best with their constituents. They need to be more aware that it is those constituents who benefit from bus lanes through faster journey times if they are commuters, or through reduced pollution from cars if they are pedestrians.

CPT's recent coach conference focussed on the timely subject of accessibility and not surprisingly it was a full house. Despite the fact that there remains much scepticism and a little anger about making wheelchair access mandatory on coaches, there are definite signs of a changing mood.

In a suitably considered statement of a kind that you would expect from a president of CPT, Steve Telling warns that there is nothing to be gained in "wishing the subject would simply go away". He commented: "The principle of equal access to all forms of transport is now a fact of life."

And accessibility is clearly not going to stop at express and scheduled services. The Department for Transport is already starting work on extending it to tourist and leisure services and some major operators have begun to accept that, in the interests of fleet utilisation and second-hand values, they may have to embrace wheelchair-accessible coaches before they become mandatory.

Of course, we are still awaiting more solutions from the manufacturers. The January deadline is likely to pass with more of a whimper than a bang in terms of new wheelchair-accessible coaches hitting the streets.

The next issue of *Bus and Coach Professional* will land on your desk on Friday 8 January. May we wish seasons greetings to all our readers and advertisers.

Steve Rooney

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NEWS BRIEFS

Wrightbus has now delivered 1,000 of its Gemini double-deckers. The 1,000th went to Arriva London, which took the first three years ago. ■

EasyBus now allows passengers to take one item of luggage free of charge. It had originally insisted that they book an extra seat for a suitcase. It has also revised some of its fares, with the fare payable to the driver by passengers who have not pre-booked being raised from £5 to £8 for journeys between Hendon and Milton Keynes. ■

Tony Cross, head of transport services at Lincolnshire county council, has been elected chairman of the Association of Transport Coordinating Officers. He succeeds Devon's Tim Davies. ■

A Scania **OmniCity** artic is on demonstration with Arriva London. So far all of London's articulated buses have been supplied by Mercedes-Benz. ■

Nottinghamshire county council's pioneering real-time information system, **NextBus**, is to be abandoned. It was introduced in 1996 and has proved to be unreliable. Its use has already been discontinued on all but one of the routes on which it was installed. Now the council is looking at wider use of Star Trak, operating successfully on Trentbarton's Nottingham to Derby Rainbow 5 route. ■

Market Prices

	Price	High	Low
Arriva	499	500	339
FirstGroup	343	349	250
Go-Ahead	1426	1426	960
National Exp.	752	765	587
Stagecoach	97	97	73
Southern Vectis	38	44	28
2 Travel	SUSPENDED		
Tellings	126	173	124

Closing prices on 6/12/04 plus 12 months high and low.

Bournemouth put up for sale

IN AN unexpected move Bournemouth council is proposing to sell its bus operation, Yellow Buses. The council's cabinet made the decision last week. It is expected to be approved at a meeting of the council this week.

Yellow Buses managing director Roy Edgley, whose retirement in March was announced a few months ago, expresses surprise at the cabinet's decision. "I find it difficult to believe they would put something of this importance in place without considering its impact," he says.

No public announcement was made about the decision, which it appears was leaked to the local press. There is no indication of how quickly the council seeks to conclude a sale.

Cabinet member for quality services and value for money, Adrian Fudge, fears that growing

competition could undermine the company's position. Go-Ahead's Wilts & Dorset subsidiary is stepping up services in the town.

Says Fudge: "Although trading well, Yellow Buses faces a competitive future and could decline, both in terms of its value and the service it offers, because the council does not have the resources to invest to keep the service competitive in the face of growing competition."

Fudge argues that the inability to invest means that the company is less able to actively market itself and to fight off competition and adds: "As an organisation, the council is facing stiff financial problems, and so it makes good commercial sense to offer for sale an asset which can bring a good return to the council."

Yellow Buses operates around 100 buses and 15 coaches,

and has just announced the appointment of former Connex Bus UK managing director John Ashmore as Edgley's successor. Ashmore, who has previously worked for Trent and for FirstGroup in the UK and the USA, joins the company next week as managing director designate.



■ Council aims to sell 115-vehicle Bournemouth operation.

Frye: Coach accessibility in everyone's interest

THE HEAD of the government's mobility unit, Ann Frye, believes that the extension of wheelchair accessibility requirements to all coaches is not only in the interests of disabled people, but also in the interests of the industry.

Speaking to operators at a CPT seminar hosted by Volvo, Frye said that the government had not yet made a decision on extending the wheelchair requirement to tourism and leisure services, but wanted to "open up discussions with the industry".

She acknowledged that the initial extension of the rules to the scheduled coach sector has not led to the development of many acceptable solutions before the deadline for introduction. "The market for scheduled coaches has been too small to generate much manufacturer interest," she said.

But Frye was unapologetic about the need for legislation. "We are not picking on the coach industry," she added. "It is part of a whole movement. Frankly, in my view, it is part of being a civilised society. Why should transport be an exception?"

Shearings' Alan Scoles warned that there would be significant

cost increases without the guarantee of added revenue. "The current solutions will not bring any side benefits to existing users," he said.

However flexibility of fleet use and the second-hand value of coaches in a post wheelchair-accessible coach era is leading to a shift in operator attitudes. Scoles noted that during its working life a coach will cascade through most types of operation meaning that operators needed to be concerned now, rather than waiting for a further extension to tourism and leisure coaches. "The 1 January deadline means as much to Shearings as it does to National Express," said Scoles.

The imminent publication of a new Disability Discrimination Bill will bring closer the end of the exemption for transport from obligations under part 3 of the current Disability Discrimination Act relating to non-discrimination. The new measures may come into force by the end of 2005, but the possibility of a general election in the spring may yet delay the passage of the bill.

On school contracts, operators were reminded that such services would become subject to the



■ Ann Frye has commissioned study on extending wheelchair access to tourist services.

passenger vehicle accessibility requirements if separate fares were charged, regardless of whether they were collected on the vehicle or through advance payment.

Allan's driver found guilty

THE DRIVER of a coach belonging to Allan's of Gorebridge has been found guilty of manslaughter after a crash in France in which a teenage girl was killed and 19 other passengers injured. The accident happened in June 2002.

The French court concluded that 33-year-old Mark Chisholm had been smoking cannabis between six and eight hours before the crash. It was the first time he had driven in France.

Chisholm was given a two-year suspended jail sentence and was ordered to pay a fine of £3,266 plus £2,000 compensation.

Clearance for Sovereign takeover

THE COMPETITION Commission has provisionally cleared the takeover by Arriva of Blazefield's Sovereign Bus & Coach business in Hertfordshire. The deal was referred to the Competition Commission by the Office of Fair Trading in August.

In its provisional findings the inquiry group (by a majority of three to two) concludes that the merger will not lead to a substantial lessening of bus competition in the area.

Diana Guy, chairman of the inquiry group, says: "Evidently it has been a close decision but on balance the majority of the group has provisionally concluded that the merger will not substantially lessen competition for either commercial or tendered bus services.

"We were all agreed that there are few overlaps on commercial routes where Arriva and Sovereign are in direct competition. Several parties explained to us that Hertfordshire was 'not good bus territory' and as such had a limited attraction for potential new entrants. The majority did not feel that this position would be affected by the merger.

"The minority view was that the merger would result in the loss of a significant competitive constraint on Arriva from

Sovereign whether under its present management or any alternative owner. The lack of suitable depot facilities would also deter market entry."

Sovereign has 45 buses, 133 employees and depots in Stevenage and Hatfield. It operates commercial and tendered services in and around the Stevenage area and also operates interurban services linking Stevenage, Hitchin, Hatfield, Welwyn Garden City, St Albans and Hemel Hempstead.

The sale – expected to be concluded in January – brings to an end a slow process of withdrawal from the south of England by Blazefield.

Earlier this year most of Sovereign's services in St Albans were taken over by Centrebus, and the Huntingdon & District business was sold to Cavalier Travel in November last year. Blazefield quit London in 2002 with the sale of London Sovereign to Transdev.

The group is now focussed on the north of England, with long-established businesses in Keighley, Harrogate and Malton, and the former Stagecoach operations in Burnley and Blackburn.

① www.sovereignbus.co.uk

£1.6billion boost for local transport

THE GOVERNMENT has announced a £1.6billion investment in local transport in England in 2005/06, covering roads, rail and buses.

Key projects affecting buses are £28million for red routes in the West Midlands – ironically announced as Birmingham city council is planning to abandon some bus priorities – and £14.5million for a bus/rail interchange in Castleford, West Yorkshire. There is also £13million for improved interchange facilities in Wolverhampton.

Also guaranteed funding is the £28million Primelines Quality Bus Network in Coventry.

At the same time transport secretary Alistair Darling announced that Rural Bus Subsidy Grant in England would be increased by 3.9 per cent with provisional allocations of £54.3million for 2006-07 and £55.6million for 2007-08.

The government says that over 2,200 new and enhanced services have been funded through RBSG with almost 29 million passenger journeys being made on these services in 2003/04. ① www.dft.gov.uk

NEWS BRIEFS

Travel West Midlands has teamed up with Birmingham department store Beatties to offer customers the chance of a free makeover in time for Christmas and New Year. Makeovers with selected leading cosmetics are available to anyone who produces a valid Travel Card or ticket. Each makeover lasts approximately half an hour. ■

Leyland Product Development has been acquired by Chinese industrialist Mr Gu Chu Jun, chairman of **Greencool Technology Holdings**. Greencool was one of the companies that was seeking to acquire the Dennis business when TransBus went into administration earlier this year. ■

London Sovereign, part of the Transdev group, has taken delivery of six Scania/East Lincs OmniDekkas. This follows a large order for East Lincs-bodied Volvo B7TLs for sister Transdev company London United. ■

A 21year-old man has been reported to the procurator fiscal following an alleged sword attack on a **First Glasgow** driver two years ago. At the time First Glasgow put up a £5,000 reward for information, but no arrests were made due to lack of evidence. New evidence has come to light in connection with a separate incident. ■

Plymouth fares rise due to vandalism costs

A RISING tide of attacks on buses has forced Plymouth Citybus to warn that increasing repair costs could force the company to raise fares. John Ackroyd, acting managing director of Citybus, says: "We have had .22 airgun pellets fired and stones thrown through the windows of moving buses. We have even had a three-inch industrial steel bolt thrown through a windscreen.

"There is a risk to the public and the driver from glass and the moving object. And there is the risk that the bus could crash. These attacks are becoming alarmingly regular and pose a real threat to the safety and confidence of our drivers and passengers.

Since September, Citybus has spent almost £15,000 on repairing damage caused by attacks on its vehicles.

Safety awards for Arriva

ARRIVA has secured the top award – Best Risk Managed Company of the Year – at this year's Brake Road Safety Awards. It also secured highly commended rankings in two other categories – Safety in Vehicle Maintenance, and Road Safety in the Community. Arriva London won the Crash Analysis Procedures award for work identifying accident blackspots on routes.

The combination of Arriva's efforts in safety has led to a noticeable drop in incidents involving its buses. And the

successful initiatives are being shared across the group's bus operations in mainland Europe.

The judges were impressed with Arriva's 'innovative and successful initiatives across the company' which have reduced incidents and led the way in risk management thinking. The judges cited initiatives from healthy living programmes addressing eyesight, tiredness and stress for drivers, aerial photography of accident blackspots to psychometric and hazard perception training.

① www.arriva.co.uk

Hendy: Routemasters to live on

TRANSPORT FOR LONDON has confirmed that it wants to retain Routemasters on service in central London. "They have their place and it isn't on a day-to-day bus service in the 21st century," says Peter Hendy, TfL's managing director for surface transport.

Hendy says that TfL's ambition is to see Routemasters operating without subsidy, and is inviting operators to come up with proposals.

It looks likely that regular scheduled Routemaster operation will end in 2005. Most of the surviving Routemasters are around 40 years old, and some specialist parts are becoming expensive to procure.

UK diesel price update

pence per litre

Northern Ireland	87.9
Scotland	87.4
Scotland - remote areas	90.9
Wales	87.6
Northern England	86.9
Midlands and East Anglia	86.9
Southern England	86.7
UK garage average	87.0
Supermarket average	85.3

Retail price sample from garages in main population centres.

Source: AA

NEWS BRIEFS

Uni-link has been named the best transport organisation in Hampshire catering for people with disabilities in the first Southampton Centre for Independent Living Business and Community Awards. The awards celebrate business and community achievements in making a difference to the lives of people with disabilities. ■

Travel Coventry is revising fares on 2 January. Existing 70p and 90p fares will rise to 75p and £1, while the £1.30 fare will be reduced to £1. ■

Two men who vandalised **Huntingdon & District** buses in the company's depot and also damaged cars in a nearby housing estate have been jailed for these and other offences involving stolen goods. Darren Crisp (27) got 11 months and Simon Pattison (20) got 12 months. The two smashed 47 windows on 14 of Huntingdon & District's buses. ■

Drivers and conductors on **Nottingham's** trams are voting on taking strike action on Christmas Eve and New Years Eve. They are protesting over Nottingham Express Transit's intention to run services until midnight on both days. Bus services in the city will cease operating around 8pm. ■

Dial-a-Ride, the door-to-door transport service for disabled people in London, has launched a multi-lingual booking facility. The new service allows non-English speaking people to make enquiries or arrange bookings in other languages. The system uses a sophisticated telephone interpreting service provided by language specialists Language Line. ■

Plymouth Citybus has invested £850,000 in eight new Dennis Darts, bringing to 84 the number of low-floor buses in the fleet. ■

Forgery find in Bath

FIRST SOMERSET & AVON has been the victim of a counterfeiting operation in which forged bus passes were being sold to students at Bath University. The fake passes were spotted by drivers.

Russell Barrington-Crow, the company's divisional bus manager, says: "We are working closely with the students' union at the University of Bath to sort out this problem as quickly as possible.

"The students' union and the University of Bath have been very co-operative so the police have not been involved - but we aren't ruling that out.

A spokesman for the University of Bath students' union adds: "The forging of bus passes is not something the union condones. It is illegal. The forgers are behaving irresponsibly and their actions could result in bus fares being pushed up for everyone."

Hourly Essex airport service

FIRST ESSEX BUSES, working with BAA Stansted and Essex county council, has launched a new hourly coach service linking Stansted airport with Chelmsford and Southend.

The new service follows the success of a coach link between the airport and Braintree and Colchester which was introduced

earlier this year and has seen significant passenger growth.

Like the Colchester service, the new route will be operated by Plaxton Cheetah midcoaches which incorporate full destination displays above the windscreen. It operates 22 hours a day, seven days a week.

① www.firstgroup.com

Box junction charges revoked

A COACH operator fined for allowing a vehicle to remain stationary on a yellow box junction in south-west London has had the charges revoked following the intervention of CPT.

The operator had been charged with being illegally stationary at the Brixton Road/Camberwell New Road yellow box junction, despite protests

that the layout of the junction gave the driver no option.

After a meeting between CPT and Darek Podwiazka, Transport for London's coach manager, Podwiazka agreed that the junction needed to be redesigned. All charges were subsequently dropped.

① www.cpt-uk.org



■ Fleet of 18 Solos upgrades Barrow services.

STAGECOACH this week improved local services in Barrow-on-Furness with a fleet of 18 new Optare Solos which replace older step-entrance minibuses on key routes in the town.

"I'm very pleased that we have been able to secure this important improvement for public transport in Barrow," says Stagecoach North West managing director Nigel Barrett.

£1.5million Barrow investment

"The investment of £1.5million represents the confidence we have in Barrow and the hope that the public will support us in helping to reverse some of the recent adverse economic trends in the area".

The introduction of the new buses will coincide with some timetable changes. Stagecoach services in the Barrow area currently carry around 371,000 passengers per month.

PayPoint outlet for Arriva

ARRIVA HAS reached an agreement with PayPoint which allows people to buy weekly or four-weekly bus tickets at around 11,000 PayPoint outlets across the UK.

Market research and customer feedback showed Arriva that customers wanted easier ways to buy bus tickets.

Catherine Mason, customer services and marketing director for Arriva's UK Bus division, says: "We believe this represents a significant improvement to the service we offer customers, especially as so many of the shops and other outlets with a PayPoint service are within just a short walk of an Arriva bus service.

"Many of our customers will already be familiar with the convenience of topping up their mobile phones or paying their BT, gas or electricity bills at PayPoint outlets. Now they can buy their bus tickets at the same time."

The use of PayPoint outlets to sell bus tickets was first tried by Arriva Scotland West in Paisley in a scheme launched in March this year.

① www.arriva.co.uk

Smart cameras in Wigan

CAMERAS embedded in the carriageway are to be installed at Wigan bus station by the Greater Manchester PTE in a move to curb speeding by buses. Details are being finalised, but the cameras could be linked to variable message signs warning drivers to slow down, or to flashing road studs.

Andrew Fender, chairman of GMPTA's policy committee, says: "On the whole, our bus stations have excellent safety records. But, from time to time, speeding buses can pose a risk to passengers. In recent years we have introduced a number of measures to address this problem, such as hand held speeding cameras and improved signage."

If the Wigan trial – due to start in the spring – proves successful, the system would be installed in other bus stations operated by the PTE.

① www.gmpte.com

Hampshire tram re-bids

A REVISED bid to build the South Hampshire Light Rapid Transit scheme has been submitted to the DfT by joint promoters Hampshire county council and Portsmouth city council following rejection of the original proposals by the DfT in July.

The rail line will link Portsmouth with Gosport and Fareham, and in the revised proposals would require government funding to the tune of £170million. Cost savings have been made by deferring the construction of a loop between the bus and rail stations in Fareham.

The leader of Hampshire county council, Ken Thornber, says: "There's no stronger case for a tram scheme than here in south Hampshire, where unlike schemes in Leeds and Manchester we're proposing a totally new link rather than an extension or parallel

scheme. The social, economic and environmental benefits far outstrip the costs, and it would be of massive benefit to commuters in the area.

"The scheme is the missing link in the transport network. We'd be putting in place a much-needed service that doesn't exist at the moment, and we believe that gives us a very robust case. We also believe that we've done everything that government asked of us when our initial revised funding bid was refused back in July."

The plans include a tunnel under Portsmouth harbour.

The two bidders for the tram project are the Smart consortium, which includes Hong Kong's MTR Corporation, and South Hampshire Supertram, in which Stagecoach is one of the partners.

www.hants.gov.uk/lrt

Survival guide to Glasgow buses

FIRST GLASGOW, which is running extra services in the pre-Christmas period, has published a 'survival guide' to encourage new users to travel by bus. It includes a voucher which offers two cans of energy drink Red Bull for £1 at WH Smith shops.

Eric Stewart, managing director at First Glasgow, says: "This time of year is always a busy time on the roads. Christmas shopping can be challenging enough without having to endure the stress and frustration of sitting in a traffic jam and fighting for that elusive parking space.

"This year we're urging people who wouldn't normally consider taking the bus to give it a try - we're sure they'd be surprised how easy it is."

www.firstgroup.com

NEWS BRIEFS

A pioneering safety and security pilot scheme in Wigan is to be funded for another six months in recognition of its success in reducing crime on public transport. The Wigan Public Transport Policing Unit - funded by the Greater Manchester PTA and Wigan council - was introduced in December 2003 for a 12-month trial, in a bid to improve safety and the perception of safety on public transport. ■

CPT has welcomed the announcement by chancellor Gordon Brown that the freeze on fuel duty will continue for the coming year. Brown made the pledge in last week's pre-budget report. Says CPT director general Brian Nimick: "This is very good news for both bus and coach industries, and a huge relief for coach tourism operators who get no relief from fuel duty." ■

Travel London, the National Express subsidiary, has launched its own website at www.travelondonbus.co.uk ■

Edinburgh is the latest city to evaluate solar-powered lighting for bus shelters. Ten are being evaluated in a pilot scheme funded by the Scottish Executive. ■

European diesel price update

pence per litre equivalent

Austria	60.34
Belgium	57.53
Czech Rep	61.16
Denmark	73.33
Estonia	51.82
Finland	65.25
France	67.35
Germany	69.46
Greece	65.95
Netherlands	65.95
Hungary	71.79
Ireland	69.46
Italy	70.16
Luxembourg	52.62
Norway	79.65
Poland	65.21
Portugal	58.23
Spain	57.53
Sweden	75.52
Switzerland	74.63

Source: AA



Coaches to be subject to TfL Low Emission Zone.

Emission standards for London coaches

BY 2007 all coaches visiting London could be required to meet minimum emissions standards to enter what is planned as a London-wide Low Emission Zone (LEZ).

Transport for London has this

month appointed consultants Deloitte to carry out a strategic study into the implementation of a planned LEZ. TfL's preferred approach is to designate the whole of Greater London as an LEZ and to require that from 2007 all buses and coaches entering the area are either Euro 3 compliant, or meet Euro 2 and have a particulate trap fitted.

The LEZ would also affect trucks, and restrictions would later apply to taxis and vans too.

If it goes ahead in 2007, it would be followed by tighter limits in 2010, when coaches and buses would be expected to meet either Euro 4, or Euro 3 with the addition of a particulate trap.

TfL says it is focussing on heavy vehicles rather than cars, because heavy vehicles create the highest pollution.

Among the items being studied are enforcement of the LEZ, and, if it uses the DVLA registration database as a way of supporting enforcement by roadside cameras, ways of applying the rules to foreign-registered coaches.

TfL indicates that grants to fit particulate traps may be available to coach operators, regardless of their location, but accepts that there are at present problems with inadequate funding at the Energy Savings Trust.

one of the reasons why people come to York is because of the park-and-ride services that make it so easy to travel into and out of the city centre.

"Across the whole network of Overground routes we have seen year on year growth of 12 per cent," adds May. "This reflects the hard work and commitment being shown by all of our staff in delivering a high quality of bus service that the people of York can be really proud of."

www.firstgroup.com

Continued growth for York

PASSENGER numbers on York's park-and-ride service are showing a 33.2 per cent increase year-on-year. The services are operated by First York under contract to York council. And First York's Overground network has experienced a 12 per cent rise in passenger numbers.

Jonathan May, managing director of First York, says: "The continued success of the park-and-ride services has given them a high profile and made them very much part of the community. We are at the stage now where



Park-and-ride and Overground network see passenger growth for First York.



Where bus lanes already exist it is essential that they remain exclusive to public transport on busy corridors like those in Birmingham or else reliability and journey times - both of crucial importance to passengers - will be compromised.

David Begg.



Bus lanes have always been seen as a pretty important weapon, not only in speeding up bus travel, but also showing other road users, stuck in congestion, that it's quicker to go by bus. But in the Midlands that could all be about to change as Birmingham councillors have a change of heart. **Peter Plisner** reports.

Let's face it, bus lanes have never really been that popular with either drivers, who object to the fact that there's less road space for them to use on their daily commute into work, or councillors who often, for the sake of winning votes, side with their constituents and oppose them.

But despite the many difficulties and against the odds, bus lanes have become a feature on many busy roads. Yet while bus operators and their regular passengers will always want more miles of priority lanes, progress is often painfully slow - and, as is the case in Birmingham, can sometimes be reversed.

For many years Birmingham City Council was a Labour-

run authority and with the government of the day championing the cause of the bus, councillors appeared happy to allow small lengths of bus lane to be placed around the city. In fact, in an effort to persuade bus firms that the centre of the city should be reserved for trams, the council even offered to build a 'Bus Mall', around the centre, reserved for buses only. Without the Bus Mall, which still hasn't been built, Birmingham has around 20 miles of bus lane, but recently about a third of that was suspended.

The initial reason was to ease congestion on a busy corridor while roadworks on the nearby M6 were being carried out. However, with the work on the

M6 now complete the suspension in Birmingham's Tyburn Road, empowered through a temporary Traffic Regulation Order (TRO), is still ongoing. Bus operators have reported a significant drop in passenger numbers along the route.

And there's more, Centro, the West Midlands PTE, was planning to use the bus lane and other new infrastructure along the route to pilot the UK's first Statutory Quality Partnership. Those plans are now on hold indefinitely.

The new Conservative authority in Birmingham has revealed that all bus lanes in the city are now under review. One of the aims of the study will be to look at options for expanding the use of



bus lanes to allow freight traffic and car sharers to use them in addition to buses. It's a bold move which the city council maintains is designed to make the best use of the existing road space in the city.

Transport cabinet member Len Gregory says: "Road space in Birmingham is very restricted and we've got to make optimum use of it. So we're looking at high occupancy vehicle lanes and we're looking at freight lanes, which will enable us to get heavy goods vehicles off the main roads very quickly".

The move has been welcomed by groups which promote car sharing. Paul Cutler, founder of Shareajourney.com says: "Building more road space is not the answer to easing congestion. Taking away existing road space from a city's busy arterial roads for under-utilised bus lanes is not conducive to easing the flow of peak-hour traffic. Making a bus lane into an HOV lane to encourage car sharing will increase the capacity of a road with fewer vehicles. It takes a change of mindset."

His views are mirrored by motoring organisations. Edmund King, of the RAC Foundation, sees the move as a step forward in transport terms. He says: "We have advocated this type change of use in the past, when the Highways Agency put a bus-only lane on the M4 near Heathrow. If we want to promote car sharing and get best possible use out of scarce resources then we should look at more innovative schemes"

But others aren't impressed. David Begg, chairman of the Commission for Integrated

Transport, says: "Widening rights of access of bus priority lanes to HGVs and HOVs is perhaps understandable if a local authority is having difficulty making a case for implementing a new priority lane. However, where bus lanes already exist it is essential that they remain exclusive to public transport on busy corridors like those in Birmingham or else reliability and journey times - both of crucial importance to passengers - will be compromised." Not surprisingly bus operators are also against the idea. Phil Bateman, Travel West Midlands corporate affairs director, says: "We've been suckered into believing that as local government 'partners' we would have a say in the way that 'agreed' policy would be developed. But we were wrong, boy were we wrong."

He adds: "We at TWM would urge the city council to re-open and ensure full legal enforcement of the bus passenger priority measures - in their original undiluted form - quickly; after all one-third of Birmingham commuters travel into the city by bus every day."

There's also concern that there'll be confusion amongst drivers across the West Midlands conurbation, particularly where bus lanes cross boundaries. Unless all the authorities follow suit and open up their bus lanes, then drivers might suddenly be required to leave the lane and rejoin the main carriageway.

There are also issues related to enforcement. In Leeds, where there's been a High Occupancy Vehicle lane for the last six years, a special police force, paid for by the council, is used to make

sure that those who use the lane are actually sharing their cars. In the Midlands there's very little enforcement going on and bus lanes are widely abused. The police don't have the resources to enforce or prosecute. Instead the city council says it will use CCTV camera technology to enforce its HOV lanes. However, even if the technology exists, there would still be serious concerns about the use of the cameras both from civil liberties bodies and the government, which would want to be sure that the technology works.

The council's action on bus lanes is already having an impact on the planning of further Showcase bus routes, the city's Quality Partnerships. Without priority measures the speed of services isn't improved and no number of new buses and improved shelters will help that situation.

Already some proposed priority measures along the route of Birmingham's Outer Circle have been scrapped and a scheme along the Hagley Road, one of the city's busiest radial routes, is now being reviewed for the second time. The decision to review the use of Birmingham's bus lanes might help to provide more road capacity in the city. But there's also the likelihood that it will also encourage more car use and the additional capacity will quickly disappear.

It could ultimately mean more traffic and less reliable bus services.



Peter Plisner is the BBC's Midlands transport correspondent



We've been suckered into believing that as local government 'partners' we would have a say in the way that 'agreed' policy would be developed. But we were wrong, boy were we wrong.

**Phil Bateman,
Travel West
Midlands.**



Without the Bus Mall, which still hasn't been built, Birmingham has around 20 miles of bus lane, but recently about a third of that was suspended.





AUSTRALIA

AN EXPRESS busway costing \$524million (£210million) is to be built in north-west Sydney. All but three kilometres of the 24km route will be a dedicated bus-only road. The first stage includes 27 stations, ten bridges, two underpasses and ten junctions with traffic light controls.

"The northwest faces huge demands with many of the 1,000 people arriving in Sydney each week moving into the region," says New South Wales premier Bob Carr. "This major new link is the fastest way to provide local families and commuters with frequent, efficient mass public transport services."

The busway is expected to open in 2007.

MEXICO

MEXICO is to get its first double-deck buses in 2005. An order for ten has been placed with East Lancs, which has in recent years secured export business in Europe.

The chassis manufacturer has yet to be named – both Volvo and Scania are active in Mexico and would appear to be the obvious choice, although East Lancs does also work with VDL Bus and with Alexander Dennis. The vehicles will be two-axle, two-door, 70-seaters.

The double-deckers will be operated in Mexico City which has a population of 16 million and is one of the world's fastest-growing cities. It has problems with traffic congestion and pollution. Earlier this year two ethanol-powered Scania OmniCitys were trialed in the city, which is considering a major upgrade of its bus network.

The ten double-deckers will be built in Britain, but longer term plans could see East Lancs shipping body kits to Mexico for local assembly. The Mexican consortium with which East Lancs is working plans to open a new bus factory in 2006.

East Lancs double-deckers are currently operating in Paris, Madrid, Barcelona, Luxembourg, Seville, Cannes and Copenhagen.



GERMANY

NEOPLAN has streamlined production at its factories in Stuttgart, Pilsting and Plauen, as part of its ProNeo project which has cost over 10million Euros (£7million). Each plant will now specialise in particular areas of the build process. Plauen focuses on body structures, Pilsting becomes the central assembly plant, and Stuttgart focuses on finishing work on the premium Starliner and Skyliner models.



SWEDEN

ARRIVA has ordered 61 CNG-powered MAN Lion's City buses for its operation in Sweden. It is one of the largest orders to be placed for CNG-powered MANs and the buses will be delivered next summer. There will be 55 standard 12m vehicles, and six extra-long three-axle 15m versions. All will have 310bhp engines. They are for operation in Helsingborg.

HOLLAND

ONE OF the biggest bus orders to be placed in mainland Europe this year has been secured by VDL. It is to supply 300 VDL Berkhof Ambassador 200 low-floor buses to Connexxion. Delivery starts in February. VDL Berkhof has now received orders for 900 of its Ambassador 200 model, which was launched in August 2002.



USA

AMERICAN voters endorsed a record number of public transport projects in last month's elections, according to the American Public Transportation Association.

Among the measures approved by voters were a long-term transit expansion plan in Denver that includes new construction of light rail and Bus Rapid Transit; a \$16billion (£8billion) plan in Phoenix that includes light rail and bus improvements; and passage of a half-cent sales tax in Charleston, that will stop the city's transit system from running out of money.

"This year has shown that it's not just big metro areas that are clamouring for transit; medium and smaller communities also see its benefits," says Stephanie Vance, programme manager for the Center for Transportation Excellence. "This has been a record year for transit initiatives. We've seen a significant jump in the number of transit initiatives on the ballot and in how many passed."

"From suburban to urban to rural communities, the success of these initiatives proves that people are willing to invest in quality transit services that will pay dividends for years to come," adds APTA president William W Millar. "Voters clearly said that they deserve a better quality of life that available public transportation brings, namely, less congestion, cleaner air, and access to jobs."

JACKSONVILLE Transportation Authority in Florida is to start buying land in 2005 for a planned 29-mile Bus Rapid Transit system with 27 stations. The BRT system is forecast to cost \$611million over 20 years. The original plan, in 1997, had been to build a light rail line, but that was abandoned because of the high costs involved.

"We don't have enough money and enough space to build enough roads," says JTA rapid transit director Ed Castellani.

"As congestion builds, and it will, people will see the difference between sitting in traffic and the speed of transit."

OPTIMA Bus Corporation, which builds the low-floor Opus using kits supplied by Wrightbus, has received orders for almost 50 vehicles from three operators.

The Capital Metropolitan Transportation Authority of Austin, Texas, is taking 30, while the Utah Transit Authority in Salt Lake City has ordered 15.

And in Tennessee, Knoxville Area Transit has placed a repeat order for four, taking its Opus fleet to 24 vehicles. Knoxville also has an option on a further 11 vehicles.

BRAZIL

BRAZIL has announced plans to have all urban buses in the country accessible to wheelchair users within ten years. A government study says that only 4.5 per cent of the country's city buses are currently wheelchair-accessible. "The country's plan is to change urban public transportation within ten years," says Renato Boareto, director of urban mobility at the Ministry of Cities. "European countries took 20 years to make this advance."

DENMARK

ARRIVA's Danish subsidiary has ordered seven Optare Solos for a new contract in Copenhagen. The buses will be two-door 22-seaters with two wheelchair bays. It is Optare's first European order in recent years.

BELGIUM

VOLVO has received its first order for buses with Euro 4 engines. The De Lijn company has ordered 42 Volvo B7RLE city buses which will be fitted with Selective Catalytic Reduction. "A major advantage of SCR, compared to other ways of reducing emissions of nitrogen oxide, is that fuel consumption is not negatively affected," says Erland Morelissen, Volvo Buses' Benelux manager. However the Euro 4 vehicles are still a long way off. The De Lijn buses, to be bodied by VDL Jonckheere, will enter service in Flanders in the second half of 2006.

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Optimo V



Ride test

Peter Plisner samples the Birmingham-London service of Megabus and National Express.



Impressions of NXL Shuttle ...

Unlike Megabus, which only runs six times per day, the new National Express service runs every half hour.

Once on board the leather seats and extra legroom were impressive, but I was less impressed by the fact that half way to Birmingham one of my fellow passengers decided to sneak a crafty cigarette in the toilet.



THE long-distance coach was always one of the cheapest ways of getting around the country. But now following the launch of Stagecoach's Megabus, it's got even cheaper. National Express, which for many years had a virtual monopoly, has recently launched its own range of low fares and new upmarket coach service called NXL Shuttle. I travelled to London and back to find out just which service provides the best value for money.

Students in the Midlands love it. Birmingham to London for just £1! They've always been fans of bus and coach travel, because it was cheap. Now it's got even cheaper. Prices have been tumbling since Megabus came on the scene. Services from the Stagecoach offshoot started in Oxford and in the north of England last year. Since then the company has expanded rapidly. It now operates services to 30 towns and cities across the UK, including between the Midlands and London.

Its buses leave Birmingham city centre and pass directly through two areas where there's an abundance of students. In another clever move on the part of Stagecoach, the service then stops at a railway station on the busy Cross City Line. It has a catchment in north and south Birmingham of more than a million potential passengers. Travelling down to London on a chilly Saturday morning I wasn't the only person waiting for the

Megabus to arrive. Although it was late, no one seemed to mind.

Once on board it was clear that the new service isn't just attracting students. Like me, some of my fellow passengers probably hadn't been in a classroom for years. But that doesn't stop them knowing a bargain when they see one. Megabus services aren't heavily advertised. However, the bus itself is enough. Its distinctive livery gives you all the information you need, including the fact that there's a 50p booking fee. Although that makes the fare £1.50, it's still a great deal and something which those on board didn't mind paying. Booking couldn't have been simpler. You just go online and give your card details and print out your e-ticket. You can even have your reservation sent, as a text message, to your mobile phone and show it to the driver.

The trip between Birmingham and London is around three hours, so it's worth taking a good book with you. The seats were comfortable and the double-deck bus even had a toilet. The only disappointment was that there was no dropping off point in the heart of London. Instead the bus terminated at the Green Line bus station, close to Victoria station. Another gripe of passengers was that there wasn't enough room for luggage.

While walking around London enjoying the sights, I wondered how exactly Stagecoach can

make any money running Megabus services. The answer is that not everyone pays just £1.50. If you book early enough you'll be lucky enough to get the low fare. Megabus says 15 to 20 per cent of seats are sold at that price. After that the fare goes up. Even at the higher price it's still a bargain when compared to the train or even the car. According to Stagecoach passenger numbers have grown by 400 per cent in the last seven months. Over one million travellers have used the service since the nationwide launch in March. Brian Souter, Stagecoach group chief executive, says: "Megabus.com has been the transport phenomenon of the year. The growth of the service has been amazing in such a short space of time."

In the Midlands the Megabus operation runs from an existing Stagecoach depot in Leamington Spa. The service uses refurbished Olympians, which the company brought over from Hong Kong, where they operated with Citybus. The success of Megabus has led the company to upgrade the fleet on some services. New vehicles are being introduced, including articulated buses and Neoplan double deckers, similar to those already running on Stagecoach's successful Oxford Tube.

For the return journey from London I decided to try out the new National Express flagship service, the NXL Shuttle. Unlike Megabus, which only runs six



Vs



times per day, the new National Express service runs every half hour. What's more you don't have to go all the way to Victoria before you can get off. The shuttle runs into Golders Green bus station, which links with the London Underground. Passengers benefit from extra legroom, leather seats, climate control and, according to National Express, all passengers are guaranteed a seat with 'dynamic capacity management'. This ensures that additional coaches are available for immediate use at busy periods.

Chief executive Denis Wormwell says: "We're offering customers value without having to compromise on quality as our lowest fare is just £1 and we have set a maximum fare so passengers will never pay more than £20.50 return." For National Express the NXL Shuttle represents a £5million investment in 14 new coaches, which have been developed by Scania in Sweden and Irizar in Spain. The vehicles have been modified to a unique specification bespoke to National Express. They have automatic gearboxes, cruise control, electrically-controlled rear-view mirrors, and electronically-adjustable drivers' seats. Early in 2005 passengers will also benefit from the introduction of the first overland TV channel in the UK.

It all sounds great, but when I travelled the journey wasn't as luxurious as I had been expecting. Like the Megabus, the

service turned up late. Once on board the leather seats and extra legroom were impressive, but I was less impressed by the fact that half way to Birmingham one of my fellow passengers decided to sneak a crafty cigarette in the toilet. Despite the smell of smoke wafting throughout the coach, our driver chose to ignore this clear breach of the rules. The service was also well loaded with lone travellers meaning that I was not able to sit next to my daughter, who had travelled to the capital with me. I had mistakenly thought that, as with the railways, there would be seat reservations. If there was, no one seemed to be policing it.

But that aside the service was comfortable, efficient and reliable. The coach even made up for the time lost in London, arriving slightly early in Birmingham.

The decision to launch NXL doesn't just flow from the need to offer passengers something extra, because of the appearance of the Megabus.

Changes to the rail timetable in September have meant the loss of a cheap direct rail service to London, run by National Express sister company Silverlink Trains. With the rail service gone and the introduction of new tilting trains on the Virgin network, National Express appears to want to tempt people onto the NXL service by offering a more acceptable form of coach travel.

Despite the minor problems on my journey, the policy does

seem to be working. Bookings for NXL are said to be very healthy, despite the alternatives that are now available. Wormwell says: "It's rewarding to hear the reaction of people using the service, when they see the leather seating and overall quality of the vehicle. It's usually a service only reserved for our top football teams."

He adds: "With customer numbers already increasing by around 4 per cent it is clear that these 'wow' coaches are giving us the opportunity to banish a few misconceptions about coach travel."

National Express will soon be introducing another 14 NXL coaches on its Bristol to London route.



Impressions of Megabus ...

Cheap and keeps the passengers cheerful.

Once on board it was clear that the new service isn't just attracting students. Like me, some of my fellow passengers probably hadn't been in a classroom for years. But that doesn't stop them knowing a bargain when they see one.



DIARY EVENTS

Saturday 8 January 2005
Exhibition: Excursions 2005

Thursday 27 January 2005
Dinner: CPT Annual Dinner,
London Hilton hotel.
www.cpt-uk.org

Wednesday-Thursday 2-3 March
Exhibition: BTTF, NEC.
www.britishtraveltradefair.com

Tuesday-Thursday 15-17 March
2005 Conference: Bonded Coach
Holiday conference, Calella,
Spain.
www.cpt-uk.org

Thursday 31 March 2005
Conference: London Transport
Awards, CBI Conference Centre,
London. 01224 263134.
www.abs.ac.uk/cftp

Tuesday-Thursday 5-7 April
Exhibition: Commercial Vehicle
Show, NEC.
www.cvshow.com

Saturday-Sunday 16-17 April
2005 Rally: UK Coach Rally,
Brighton. 01753 631170

Monday-Tuesday 25-26 April
2005 Conference: CPT Scottish
Council, Gleneagles Hotel. 0131
272 2150.
www.cpt-uk.org

Tuesday-Wednesday 10-11
May 2005 Conference: Album
2005, De Vere Belton Woods,
Grantham.
0115 950 5745

Wednesday-Thursday 18-19
May Exhibition: Coach Tourism,
Stoneleigh Park, Warwickshire.
www.coachtourism.com

Sunday-Thursday 5-9 June 2005
Conference and exhibition: UITP,
Rome.
www.uitp.com/rome2005

Buzzlines pull for Children in Need

I KNOW professional recovery services are expensive, but surely you don't need to call all your drivers to the rescue when your new coach breaks down. Well, actually, that's not what's happening here, as you've probably guessed.

This is a group of Buzzlines drivers doing their bit for the Children in Need campaign, pulling a 19-tonne Neoplan Skyliner through Hythe shopping centre. The Buzzlines team raised more than £290 for Children in Need and are now planning further charity fund raising events.



Talking double-deck

I KNOW that Ceredigion is remote. Indeed it's so remote that it's one of the few places in mainland Britain which I've never visited. It's also, it would appear, remote from some common English language usage.

The council is reporting satisfaction with the introduction of 70-seat coaches to school contracts, which is good to hear, but then says on its website that it has taken steps to ensure that "twin floor buses" are no longer used on school runs.

Twin floor buses? Yes they are what those of us in most of the rest of the English-speaking world know as double-deckers.

Healthy food for Scots commuters

THE Scots have a reputation for poor dietary habits – deep-fried Mars bars are, I'm told, the height of culinary excellence north of the border.

To address the issue of healthy eating, Scottish Citylink has struck a deal with Scotmid – a fancy new name for what used to be the Co-op – which over a three-month period sees Citylink commuters on services between Glasgow and Edinburgh being offered a selection of free fruit and healthy snacks on Monday mornings between 6am and 9am.

Paul Murphy, marketing manager of Citylink, says: "The initiative is designed as a fun way to promote the importance of healthy living as well as thanking our customers for their loyalty and support."

"We will be giving away 500 pieces of fruit or healthy snacks every Monday morning and we hope that it will help to kick start the week for our passengers travelling between Glasgow and Edinburgh."



Those were the days . . .



HUDDERSFIELD has been in the news recently as it has started to receive a major influx of new buses, starting with some Wrightbus Eclipse Gemini double-deckers. The operator is, of course, First West Yorkshire, which has come in for some recent criticism over the age of its fleet in the town.

Back in 1969, services were provided by Huddersfield Corporation and by the Huddersfield Joint Omnibus Committee, and the JOC – owned jointly by British Railways and Huddersfield Corporation – was the owner of this Daimler Fleetline with 75-seat Roe body.

Roe-bodied Fleetlines were the standard at Huddersfield

around this time – and the bus visible in the background is a single-deck version of the same combination.

At this time the double-decker would have been crew-operated. One-man double-decker operation had only just been legalised, and was still a contentious issue with staff and unions.

Huddersfield Corporation took total control of bus services in the town towards the end of 1969, and the services were absorbed by the West Yorkshire PTE in 1974. That metamorphosed into the privatised Yorkshire Rider business in 1988 which was then bought by Badgerline in 1994 and ultimately became today's First West Yorkshire.



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Brake award for Wheelsure

WHEELSURE'S wheel nut locking device has won the Vehicle Safety Invention Award in Brake's Fleet Safety Forum Awards for Excellence.

"Wheel loss is a very serious issue that refuses to go away," says Brake chief executive Mary Williams. "Only last month a woman was tragically killed by a loose lorry wheel. Wheelsure deserved to win this award because through their extensive research into the causes of wheel nut loosening, they have developed a product that demonstrates their in-depth understanding of this complex issue and offers operators an effective solution."

Wheelsure chief executive officer Gerhard Dodl said: "We are absolutely delighted to be receiving this award."



■ **Wheelsure chief executive officer Gerhard Dodl receives Brake's Vehicle Safety Invention Award.**

Our first year in business has been tremendously exciting and rewarding, from the product trials through to the launch and then onto sales development. But to be able to celebrate our first anniversary with this achievement is fantastic."

Secure fuel management

The Optimum.PC system designed by SSL, enables fuel management control with automatic number plate recognition.

The system works with Triscan Fuel Management and CitySync Automatic Number Plate Recognition. Each terminal supports up to four fuel pumps and allows authorised vehicles to draw fuel by checking the vehicle registration plate against an approved list. SSL's Optimum.PC does not require special number plates, keys or tags.

Optimum.PC is suitable for

single or multiple site use, says SSL.

"All the software has been designed to be both straightforward and easy to use, says SSL director John Ashley. "A wide range of reports are available, ranging from general fuel usage through to vehicle access times. It is extremely user friendly and enables you to access the information quickly and easily. It was very well received at the recent Coach & Bus 2004 show".

www.s-s-l.com

Moseley stretches spraying facilities

TO meet the needs of longer vehicles Moseley PCV has extended its spraybooth facilities. The installation was carried out by Beta Automotive which is also providing regular maintenance support.

Extending the existing spraybooth was necessary to accommodate the new longer length, rigid, 2-axle vehicles allowed since the change in legislation.

Moseley PCV general manager Mike Coleman says: "Our spraybooth was 16 metres long which was fine for the 12-metre vehicles, but obviously to work

on the new 15-metre models, we needed a bigger booth.

"The contract was put out to tender and we chose Beta because it offered a complete one-stop-shop service. The Beta team was able to handle everything from changing the air pipe on the compressor to carrying out electrical work and actually extending the booth. That was a very attractive proposition because we didn't have to find additional specialists to do the ancillary work."

The installation was carried within a week out to minimise downtime.

SOE/IRTE welcomes parliamentary debate on vehicle licensing

THE Society of Operations Engineers has welcomed a call from Labour MP Chris Ruane for formal regulation of the garage servicing industry through regulation and licensing. Ruane's proposal focuses on the passenger car market, but SOE believes it also has implications for the PCV and commercial vehicle sectors.

"Although Mr Ruane's bill specifically addresses the car industry, we see any move to improve standards and confidence in the vehicle industry as a positive step," says SOE chief executive Tracey Shelley. "We have long been calling for mandatory licensing of the commercial vehicle industry; however, we have viewed it as a long-term goal. I am delighted that other sectors of the road

transport industry are now recognising the importance of licensing and are joining us in calling for action," she continues.

SOE's IRTE Professional Sector runs the IRTEC Licensing Scheme for mechanics and technicians.

IRTEC tests the scope of a mechanic's knowledge through both practical and theoretical tests and ensures that candidates are up-to-date and adhere to safe working procedures. IRTEC operates in the heavy vehicle (over 7.5t), light vehicle (under 7.5t), hybrid (both light and heavy goods vehicles) and the bus and coach sectors. The scheme is currently voluntary and licences are renewable after a maximum of 5 years.

www.irtec.org.uk

Composite structure for Compak

COMPAK has begun supplying an all-composite version of its manual access ramp. The project has taken around 12 months longer to complete than envisaged, according to Compak, due to complex structure of the sophisticated moulds needed to form the ramp sections.

"We wanted to create as much of the ramp as possible during the pressing; including the anti-slip surface," says Lee Allen, Compak managing director. "While ultimately this substantially reduces final assembly time it did mean protracted delays in getting the moulds absolutely correct."

Previously comprising a ramp platform manufactured in GRP

pivoting on a steel floor pan, both sections are now constructed by compressing a hot composite material into moulds using a 1,500 ton press. Following the pressing the operating handle, pivot pins and handle retaining clip (which are also corrosion resistant) are attached together with a contrasting band of anti-slip material around the ramp perimeter.

Compak is now handling a number of enquiries relating to the new range of low-floor minibuses. "I believe we will experience a substantial uptake for the ramp in this market," says Allen. "We exhibited at the recent CTA show where a large number of vehicle builders expressed a

positive interest in the fact that it is supplied in cassette format with location points that are pre-formed in the floor pan during pressing to ensure consistent pitch and position."

To guarantee the ramp offers customers longevity in performance simulating life cycles of 5,000 deployments were carried out. The platform and floor pan were also subjected to a wheelchair loading equal to 1,000kg.

In anticipation of an increase in demand from European manufacturers the ramp can be installed on either right- or left-hand drive vehicles.



■ **Compak's new all-composite manual access ramp.**

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Scania (94, 112, 113 & 124 series)
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DRIVING ON THE EDINBURGH BUSWAY

In an exclusive test report for *Bus and Coach Professional*, Gavin Booth joined a driver training session for the new Edinburgh guided busway which was formally opened last week.



All Lothian buses that can be used on Fastlink carry yellow diamonds with the letter 'G' in the front windscreen and the fleet numbers now carry a G suffix.



DRIVING on a guided busway is a very different experience to driving on normal roads, as I discovered when I sat in on a training session for Lothian Buses staff who will be working on routes using the new 1.5km Fastlink guided busway. The route was opened last week by transport secretary Alistair Darling, and forms the centrepiece of the West Edinburgh Busway System (WEBS), to be known in future as Fastlink. Over 100 drivers on the company's single-deck rota were being trained for the December launch as the first route on the guideway is the high-frequency single-deck 22, worked by a batch of 30 Volvo B7RLEs with Wrightbus Eclipse Urban bodies, bought specially for the new facility. Double-deck route 2 will

use the guideway from a date early in 2005, and 20 TransBus Trident/Presidents are also being fitted with guidewheels for this.

Lothian's Owen Boyle introduced drivers to the guideway concept, the first in Scotland and the longest continuous guided busway in Britain. He showed diagrams of the 2.6m-wide channel and photos of the guidewheels fitted to the selected vehicles. All Lothian buses that can be used on Fastlink carry yellow diamonds with the letter 'G' in the front windscreen and the fleet numbers now carry a G suffix. Internal notices in the driver's cab indicate whether or not the bus is suitable for guideway use.

In addition to normal checks, drivers have to make a visual check of the guidewheels for wear to the arms or the wheel,

and gently kick the edge of both guidewheel tyres to check that the wheel is not seized or the bearing damaged. If there is any doubt they are instructed to seek guidance before leaving the depot.

Drivers are warned to be aware of the extra width resulting from the sideways projection of the guidewheels, in relation to pedestrians, cyclists and other vehicles, and squeezing through tight situations. The danger of hitting a solid object, which could wrest the steering from the driver's hands, was particularly emphasised, and drivers have to visually check for any damage before proceeding.

Boyle pointed out a particular danger, where a guidewheel goes over a kerb and the kerb height increases, wedging the guidewheel and forcing the steering to the left.

On the guideway, though, Boyle said that drivers would be "facing alien circumstances" and that a totally different driving culture had to be adopted. Moving from a normal roadway on to the guideway, drivers would meet an entry funnel that had to be approached at no more than 20mph; Boyle suggested 10-15mph would be fast enough.

A straight approach was desirable and red markings and reflectors on the right indicate the start of the guideway proper. Drivers have to gently engage the right-hand guidewheel and would feel the bus straightening as it entered the guideway.





They were warned never to wrap their fingers round the steering wheel, but rest their palms lightly on the rim. The accelerator and brake would control the bus, and Boyle underlined the need to drive within the limits of straight-line braking ability, as drivers would be unable to swerve to avoid a problem.

The speed limits on Fastlink are 20mph at the entry funnels and at pedestrian crossings, and 30mph on all other sections. Boyle warned that Lothian would be out using their hand-held speed camera to check speeds. The guideway comes within the legal jurisdiction of the Rail Inspectorate as far as the infrastructure and operation of it are concerned, and British Transport Police are also involved.

Lothian's instructions to drivers also cover breakdowns on the guideway, where drivers are told to switch on hazard lights and contact control staff at the company's Central depot, who will advise other buses of the problem. Passengers are to

be advised to stay on the bus if this is safe until assistance arrives when passengers will be escorted to the nearest halt. In the event of fire, drivers are to evacuate the bus, avoiding the other carriageway.

After this thorough briefing there was a chance to drive on the new guideway myself. Lothian's Kenny Campbell had arranged to use one of the guidewheel-fitted Tridents, and we were accompanied by Martin Platts, senior driving instructor at Arriva's Wakefield depot, who was heavily involved in the pioneering East Leeds busway.

Continued on Page 20 ►



The new 1.5km West Edinburgh guided busway forms the centrepiece of the West Edinburgh Busway System (WEBS), to be known in future as FastLink.





Continued from Page 19 ►



You take your hands off the steering wheel as the bus crosses the gap in the guideway kerbs at light-controlled crossings, and avoid braking, which could cause the bus to veer to one side. The hands-off instruction was well founded; as the bus re-engages with the guidekerb the steering wheel can move quite forcibly, and could injure the driver.



DRIVING ON THE

Lothian had taken a B7RLE and a Trident to Yorkshire to try them on the Leeds system, and Platts had been sent to Edinburgh to share his experience with Lothian staff. Kenny Campbell drove the bus to the end of the guideway and back again, demonstrating how to approach the guideway, and the procedure at stops – bus halts as they should be described. Passenger access to these halts from adjacent houses and offices is by pathways, and the halts are staggered on either side of pedestrian crossings. The light-controlled crossings mean that there is a break in the guideway kerbs, and Campbell explained the procedure for driving through this short gap. You take your hands off the steering wheel as the bus crosses the gap, he said, and avoid braking, which could cause the bus to veer to one side.

The hands-off instruction was well founded; as the bus re-engages with the guidekerb the steering wheel can move quite forcibly, and could injure the driver.

The other consideration was leaving the busway to rejoin the normal road. Here the road surface changes from concrete to tarmac and as the changeover point is approached drivers are told to hold the wheel as they normally would, but not to steer until clear of the guideway.

Then it was my turn. Like the Lothian drivers at the training session I was apprehensive about the guideway experience, and approached it cautiously, but once the bus was fully engaged, I had to resist the natural instinct to grasp the steering wheel, and particularly at the pedestrian crossing gaps I had to be reminded to take my hands off the wheel.



■ Transport secretary Alistair Darling cuts the ribbon to formally open Edinburgh's Fastlink.

EDINBURGH BUSWAY

On the guideway itself there was a bit of lateral movement – Owen Boyle had used the very expressive Scottish term ‘shoogling’ – but this was more apparent to the driver than to passengers on the bus. Braking for bus halts was easy, with a clear boarding point for passengers. The height of the passenger platform at 200mm is 20mm higher than the normal guidekerb, so kneeling should be unnecessary and use of the ramp is forbidden as it could foul the kerb. Leaving the guideway is again straightforward, and use of the mirrors and the change in road surface tell you when normal driving is to be resumed.

The £10million Fastlink scheme also includes a range of other bus priority measures, including around two miles of new greenways west of the city centre towards the busway as well as road widening to create a

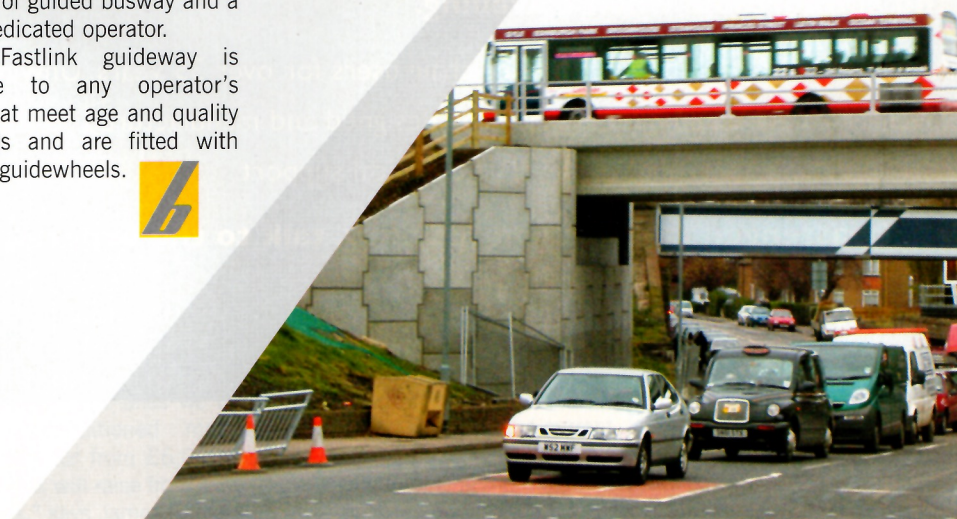
new three-quarter mile inbound greenway. Bus-only gates and kiss-and-ride facilities have also been provided at Hermiston Gait, by the city bypass. The actual guided busway section of the scheme cost £7million and the extensive additional ‘on-street, off-busway’ elements of the scheme the balance of £3million.

Fastlink is the more practical successor to the previous CERT scheme that collapsed in 2000 when the preferred bidder, FirstBus, pulled out just before construction started. CERT would have involved longer sections of guided busway and a single dedicated operator.

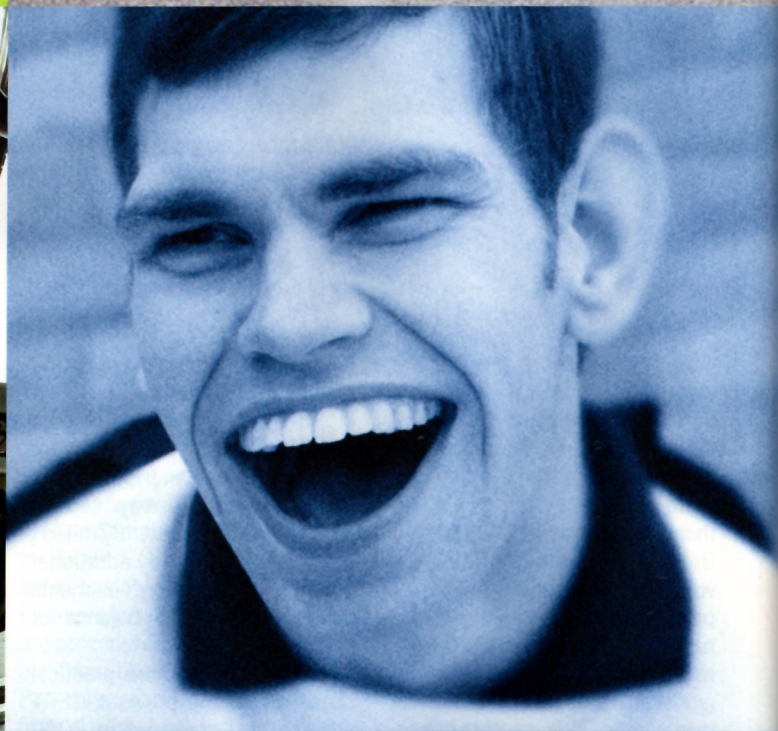
The Fastlink guideway is available to any operator's buses that meet age and quality standards and are fitted with suitable guidewheels.



Drivers are warned to be aware of the extra width resulting from the sideways projection of the guidewheels, in relation to pedestrians, cyclists and other vehicles, and squeezing through tight situations.



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LIFTING CAPACITY



Steve Banner reviews the options available to the operator looking to install a workshop lift.

▶ *Continued on Page 24*

Bus and coach service and repair workshops with insufficient space could do worse than take a close look at using mobile column lifts.

When not in use they can be pushed into a corner, out of the way; something you can't do with permanently installed pits or lifts. When they're needed they can be set up wherever there's a three-phase power supply – it may be possible to use single phase instead – and that includes outside if you've got a sufficiently substantial concrete pad.

Using them to support a vehicle that's being pressure-washed won't be a problem just so long as they've been built to the IP65 pressure washer standard.

Just one person is required to move the columns in most cases, even though they may weigh from 400kg to 500kg.

Because they're movable they're suitable for a vehicle of

any wheelbase, and if you move depots, you can take them with you. Acquire longer vehicles, and all you need to do is add extra columns to the set.

Price is another advantage. A 22-tonne capacity four-column electromechanical mobile column lift will set you back as little as £7,000, while one capable of raising 30 tonnes can cost approximately £8,500.

"That compares with over £20,000 for a fixed lift of the same capacity," observes Phil Stockford of Phil Stockford Garage Equipment.

If even £7,000 is too much, then it's worth noting that a number of suppliers offer reconditioned mobile column sets.

"As well as new ones we can provide reconditioned mobile column lifts for from £6,000 to £7,000 that will raise from 12 to 28 tonnes," says James Radford,

sales director at Somers. "We replace all the load-bearing components and provide a six month parts and labour warranty along with a test certificate.

"That compares with the 12 month warranty we offer on new column lifts," he continues. "We extend that to two years – ten years on load-bearing components – if the customer signs a full service and maintenance contract."

Somers Vehicle Lifts and sister company Totalkare have just been acquired by their management from troubled parent Triapt. The new business will be known as Somers Totalkare. It plans to launch a range of new lifts. Parts and service support for the existing range will continue to be maintained, says Radford, and all outstanding orders for the current lift line-up will be fulfilled.

As well as selling them Somers can supply column lifts on

contract hire, and even on short-term rental.

Column lifts do have their drawbacks. They take a while to deploy – and an expensive technician's time can be put to better use – and because they support the wheels, it's not possible for a fitter to work wheel-free.

One way around this is to use the lift to place the vehicle on axle stands, then bring it back to lower it to the ground once the work has been completed. At £850 apiece stands are admittedly cheaper than lifts, but again this takes time.

What's more, once a bus or coach is positioned on stands, its working height is fixed. That's awkward if the technician needs to raise or lower it a little.

The ability to work wheel-free by using a jacking beam is of course one of the advantages of using four- and six-post lifts.

Pushing column lifts about means that you may end up trailing cable all over the place. There's always the risk that somebody will trip over it, and injure themselves.

If space is a worry, but column lifts aren't felt to be the right choice, then it may be worth thinking about installing a lift that fits almost or completely flush to the floor. The area it occupies can be put to other uses when the lift is not needed.

"In-ground lifts usually use two hydraulic rams to raise the bus or coach," explains Clive Bogg, sales executive at garage equipment supplier Gemco. "The second one can be moved along according to the wheelbase of the vehicle, but the front one is fixed."

"We offer this type of lift with a capacity of from 16 to 90 tonnes," he continues. "Because it's not being moved about, heavy-duty rams with a cylinder diameter of as much as 200mm can be specified, and it's wheel-free."

The main drawback is the installation cost. "You've got to dig a big hole in the ground," he observes.

As a consequence the total price could be two to three times

that of a column lift of equivalent capacity. That said, it may be possible to install it in an existing pit that's outlived its usefulness, then fill the rest of the pit in.

Once it's in place an in-ground lift is less likely to suffer damage than its above-the-ground counterparts, and is likely to last for a remarkably long time, Bogg contends.

"The hydraulic system is enclosed and protected from dirt, so that helps," he says. "In-ground lifts are certainly more durable than four/six poster lifts or column lifts."

Post-type lifts can be recessed into the floor too if needs be, as can parallelogram-style lifts, says Simon Laffoley, UK national account manager at Stertil.

"Our range includes parallelogram lifts that will raise up to 52 tonnes," he says. "They can be joined together to lift bendibuses."

MAHA's new SL scissor lift can be installed above or below floor level, and is capable of coping with weights of from 10 to 40 tonnes.

No matter what type of lift you choose, health and safety requirements must be observed, says the Garage Equipment Association (GEA).



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Lifts must be commissioned and maintained in line with Sections 5 and 6 of BS7980, and the Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998 and the Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations 1998 apply. The latter requires them to be thoroughly inspected once every six months by 'a competent person'.

He or she will almost certainly be a fully qualified workshop lift engineer.

London-based Brentons is one coach firm that's just invested in some new mobile column lifts.

It's acquired four sets made by Somers, each one of which has a 30 tonne capacity. Two of them can be used in conjunction with a pressure washer.

"We like the fact that we can use them wherever we like," says engineering manager, Chris Prowse. "We've got small-wheel adapters so that they can be used to lift lighter vehicles if needs be, and we regularly use them to place vehicles we're



Pits may represent the only solution if your workshop has a low ceiling, and nowhere outside where vehicles can be worked on. Use a lift under those circumstances, and you're liable to find that your bus or coach will disappear through the roof.



► Continued on Page 26



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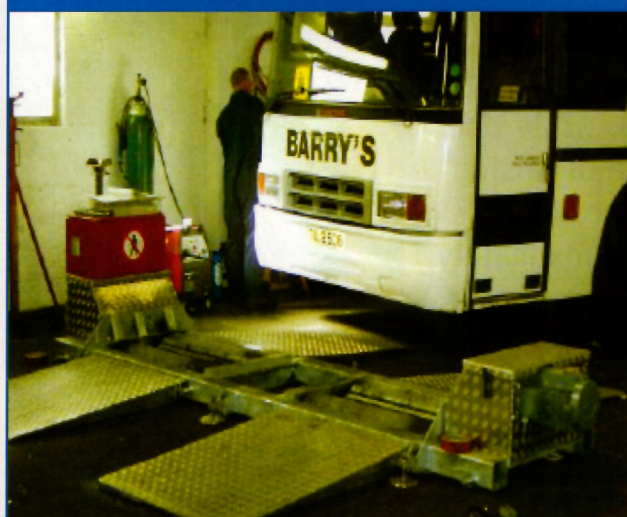


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In-ground lifts usually use two hydraulic rams to raise the bus or coach. The second one can be moved along according to the wheelbase of the vehicle, but the front one is fixed.

Clive Bogg, Gemco.



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GEA

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working on on stands.

"They take a while to set up, but they're easy to move about, and we can easily relocate them to another site should we wish to."

The fleet includes 16 coaches, and Brentons takes on third party servicing work too.

So where does all this leave the humble pit? Lift manufacturers are of course quick to point out its drawbacks, including the risk that somebody will drive a vehicle into it, or tumble in and hurt themselves, if the correct safety precautions aren't observed.

Pits do have their advantages however. Maintenance is minimal, and they're invaluable in situations where you need to have somebody working beneath a vehicle, and somebody above it.

They may represent the only solution if your workshop has a low ceiling, and nowhere outside where vehicles can be worked on. Use a lift under those

circumstances, and you're liable to find that your bus or coach will disappear through the roof.

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Options include fluorescent lights, recesses to house equipment, and full-width steps and – because they're prefabricated – many of these pits can be taken out and installed in new premises.

"We've managed to transform vehicle pits from being dirty, damp holes in the ground into sophisticated pieces of workshop equipment," says the company.



A 22-tonne capacity four-column electromechanical mobile column lift will set you back as little as £7,000, while one capable of raising 30 tonnes can cost approximately £8,500.

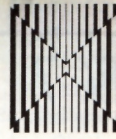


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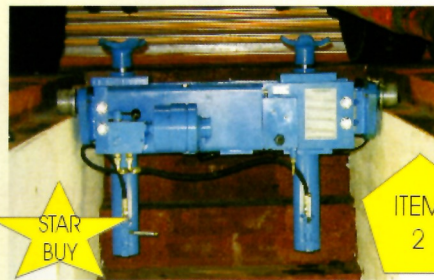


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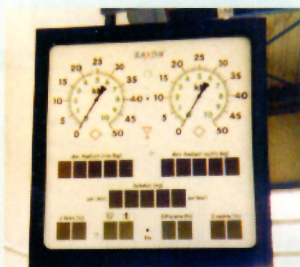
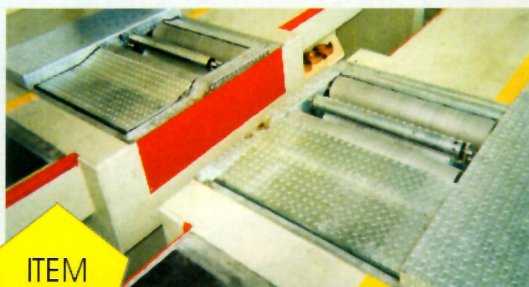
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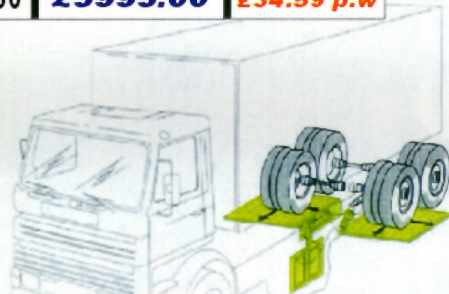
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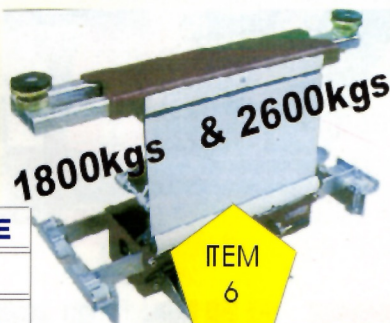
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Whilst modern paint industry experts shun the humble paintbrush, many operators find that it still suits them in terms of cost and flexibility.

Steve Banner reports.

Brush strokes



Newport employs its own painters who also double as body builders – it handles 99 per cent of all repair work in-house – and each of the fleet's 85-plus vehicles is repainted every two-and-a-half to three years.



Body shops have installed some impressive – and expensive – equipment over the past few years in a bid to improve paint finishes. Spray booths and spraying systems are all far more sophisticated than ever before, and the technology employed is likely to get even better.

So why do so many bus operators still persist in refinishing their vehicles using nothing more advanced than a pot of paint and a brush?

That's certainly the approach adopted by Newport Transport, says managing director Trevor Roberts, and he makes no apologies for it.

"It gives us a high quality finish," he states. "Spray paint might be quicker, but I doubt the results would be as good."

Newport employs its own painters who also double as body builders – it handles 99 per cent of all repair work in-house – and each of the fleet's 85-plus vehicles is repainted every two-

and-a-half to three years.

"The quality of the paintwork is so high that they could probably last for another year if they had to," says Roberts. He'd prefer to stick with the existing repainting programme however.

"The appearance of our vehicles and the impression they make when they're out on the road is so very important," he says.

Painting something the size of a bus by hand obviously can't be done in five minutes, and the need for the paint to dry lengthens the time the vehicle spends off the road. "That's not too big an issue for us though because we carry a slightly higher number of spare buses than the big groups," he remarks.

If it went the spray paint route and continued to handle the work in-house, Newport would have to install a spray booth, Roberts points out. "That's not something our site would lend itself to," he observes; and it would of course cost money.

"However we have got a separate paint shop," he says.

Having the necessary skills available in-house made it possible for Newport to convert a double-decker for open-topped sightseeing work last year.

"We removed the roof, and painted the whole vehicle in sightseeing red," he says. "We're really proud of it, but I don't think we'd have done it if we'd had to put the work out."

"Using our own people allows us to keep better control of costs, and gives us flexibility too."

Blackburn Transport aims to repaint its buses once every three years. It's a plan that's been disrupted recently however by the disposal of several old vehicles and the acquisition of a number of second-hand Olympians, says operations director, Jim Hilton.

"We got them from all over the place – some came from London – and we had to repaint them in

► Continued on Page 30



our colours," he says.

While some of Blackburn's repainting work is handled by local third party body shop S & T – a subsidiary of East Lancs Coachbuilders – it also employs an in-house painter. Again, brush-painting rules so far as work carried out internally is concerned.

"It's easy and it's convenient, especially when it comes to repairs," says Hilton. "The trouble with spray booths is that you've got to have the space."

Ease of repair is vitally important to Blackburn, as it is to any bus operator.

"With cars parked all over the place, on double yellow lines and at bus stops, our drivers have to contend with some difficult conditions," he says. "We try to keep the fleet as tidy as we can, so when we get low speed bumps, they have to be attended to."

Like Blackburn Transport, Swindon's Thamesdown Transport puts a lot of its repainting work out to third parties, but brush-paints the 25 buses it uses for school contract work at its own premises.

"We can cope with that," says managing director John Owen. "If we repainted our 90-odd service buses ourselves too then I'd need a lot more staff than I've got now."

Nexa Autocolour commercial vehicle marketing manager, Steve Mitchell, politely doubts whether a brush finish can ever be quite as good as one that's been sprayed on. "Spraying gives you very fine atomisation of the paint, and that's something you simply don't get when you use a brush," he contends.

"What's more, a brush will only

allow you to do solid colours." Brushing on a metallic paint simply wouldn't be practical.

"It's quicker to spray on paint than use a brush, and sprayed-on two-pack paint dries harder," says Tony Briggs, proprietor of Port Talbot based James Coach Painters. "The shine lasts longer too."

"Sprayed-on two-pack is by far the best finish," says S & T managing director, Bernard Hunt. "It's a bit like a resin, and will retain its gloss for about five years if it's washed correctly."

"Brush-painting is cheaper, but the finish may look dull after 12 to 18 months."

Spray paint does have some drawbacks however, Mitchell concedes. Aside from the need to invest in the necessary facilities – a spray booth big enough to accommodate a double decker could cost £150,000 to £200,000 according to leading refinishers – you get overspray. That's something you clearly don't suffer from if you wield a brush.

Furthermore, the process generates emissions that have to be controlled. That means that there are always going to be environmental and health and safety concerns.

"People spraying paint have to use air-fed masks to ensure they are breathing fresh air all the time," says Hunt.

"It requires a lot more preparation work as well," says Briggs.

"You need to do a lot of masking of windows and so on. If you use a brush, then hardly any masking is required."

He estimates that it takes roughly a week to brush-paint a double decker. Spray-painting a brand-new one would take approximately two days, including all the masking up, rising to from three to four days to respray one that's seen a few years of service.

There's one fundamental problem with brush painting however, says Briggs. The skills required to do it properly are gradually disappearing.

"There probably won't be anybody around who is capable of doing it in ten years time," he predicts. "There aren't all that many good brush painters about now."

"If our skilled people retired, then we might have to rethink our whole approach," says Roberts. "It was having two of our painters retire at the same time that prompted us to look at putting a lot of our work out," says Owen.



The skills required to do brush painting properly are gradually disappearing. There probably won't be anybody around who is capable of doing it in ten years time. There aren't all that many good brush painters about now. **Tony Briggs, James Coach Painters.**



► Continued on Page 32



JAMES COACH PAINTERS

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Swindon's Thamesdown Transport puts a lot of its repainting work out to third parties, but brush-paints the 25 buses it uses for school contract work at its own premises.



Not that the skills involved in spray painting should be underestimated, says Hunt.

"Spraying a big vehicle with a metallic paint for instance is a particularly demanding task because the entire surface has to be kept constantly wet," he points out. "If it isn't, then you end up with shadows."

"I really think that the future lies with booths and two-pack paint that's sprayed on," says Mitchell.

"Increasingly too we'll be talking about water-borne paint on environmental grounds," he continues. "Water-borne base coats are common now, and clear

coats and direct glosses are very much heading in that direction."

As Hunt points out, if you've gone to the trouble of having your buses repainted regularly, then it's a pity not to keep them spick and span. What you don't want to do however is apply an overly aggressive cleaning chemical, says WashTec.

It advises the use of a PH neutral product such as Transclean 2, a detergent designed for use in automatic brush washes. Use one with a high alkaline content day after day, and the paint surface may be harmed.

Vehicle presentation is alas

ignored by all too many firms, says Roberts.

"Too many operators chuck buses out onto the road without bothering about the way they look," he states. "I think that's unacceptable."



Contacts

James Coach Painters
01639 888840

www.jamescoachpainters.co.uk

Nexa Autocolour

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A testing year

Gavin Booth takes a look back at the past year of vehicle evaluations in *Bus and Coach Professional*.

Looking back over the past year's *Tried & Tested* reports, there are three recurring themes:

1. Most new buses and coaches have a few teething problems when they arrive, but manufacturers and dealers seem

to understand this because they get sorted very quickly.

2. Major chassis or body problems are rare in the first few years.

3. Even the most apparently dedicated customers can be fickle and their heads can be turned by competing products.

(The consolation for the sales people here is that buying something different often only serves to confirm that the original choice was the right one.)

The 12 buses and coaches I have tested over the past year could not have been more different. There was one minibus, one midi coach, four very different 12m-long coaches;

one extra-long coach; three full-size single-deck buses; a purpose-built school bus; and an 18m-long articulated bus. No double-deckers, but we have a couple on our 'to do' list.

We looked at proven best-sellers as well as types that have yet to make a real impact in the UK. On these pages is a summary of what we found.



extra-long coach ...

Bova Futura Magnum

The first extra-long coach to be delivered to a UK operator, the 13.85m-long 430bhp Bova bought by Austin Travel for its Scotline Tours operation was an impressive beast. Bought to avoid duplication on its popular day tours programme from Edinburgh, the 57-seat Futura Magnum is impressive by any standards. As a driver, you are not really aware of the extra length, though care has to be taken on corners and roundabouts as a result of the rear outswing. On winding roads in the Scottish Borders it caused no problems and the extra capacity makes economic sense for the operator, particularly with a fuel consumption figure of around 10-11mpg.



a chunky little 35-seat coach ...

BMC 850 Club

A chunky little 35-seat coach for under £100,000 returning 16mpg can't be bad. Silver Coach Lines in Edinburgh bought this early example of the Turkish-built coach for day tour work and with a 220bhp Cummins ISBe and a rather notchy ZF 6S-890 gearbox, it has proved to be a useful buy. Its owners experienced a few minor niggles, like controls that were too flimsy, and there wasn't much luggage space, but BMC is aware of these shortcomings. An automatic version would make a difference, but the 8.85m-long coach, at 3.4m high, is a sturdy tourer.



a lot of coach for your money ...

Iveco EuroRider C35/Beulas El Mundo

The Beulas-bodied EuroRider is a familiar shape on Britain's roads, and Gardiner Bros of Spennymoor was more than happy with its 12m-long coaches, which offer bags of power and a comfortable ride. The high (3.84m) Beulas body seems well-built and provides lots of luggage space. The big 350bhp Iveco Cursor cruised up hill and down dale and the ZF automatic box provided seamless changes. At just under £200,000 you get a lot of coach for your money, and at 9.4mpg it's reasonably economical to run. The looks, particularly on the high-floor version, are a bit ungainly, and the Beulas styles supplied to the UK look just a bit outdated.



full-size bus without the weight ...

TransBus Enviro300

Not the most common sight on UK roads – a situation not helped by TransBus' problems – the Enviro300 is a 12m-long 45-seater that shares some features of the Dennis Dart, like the Cummins ISBe engine, but isn't a Dart. Mitchell's Coaches of Plean, not far from the Alexander plant at Falkirk, finds the Enviro300 ideal for its main Plean-Stirling route. At 8500kg this is a full-size bus without the weight penalty of some of its competitors, and it returns a creditable 9.5-10mpg on a mix of urban and open road conditions. Mitchell's bought it for £106,000, though current prices are liable to be at least 10 per cent higher.



practical and attractive 42-seater ...

MAN 18.220/Alexander ALX300

You might expect Stagecoach's current full-size standard single-decker to be a no-nonsense bus, and this is exactly how the 18.220 comes across. Now in its 'Mark 2' version, following suggestions from Stagecoach engineers with experience of earlier examples, it has been developed for what is arguably the most down-to-earth of the big groups. It has no pretensions, but is a practical and attractive 42-seater. The engineers at Slatyford depot in Newcastle regarded the MANs as acceptable replacements for their beloved Scania N113s, and with a fuel consumption of just over 7mpg they earn their keep.



beefy 53-seater ...

Scania K114IB/Irizar Century

A good example of one-stop shopping, the Scania Century coach has become familiar in the UK over more than a decade. Doig's of Glasgow has seven Centuries and we tested a 340bhp version with Scania's Comfort Shift gearbox, which allows easy gear changing as well as a preselect facility. The beefy 53-seater also offered loads of luggage space, and returned a creditable 8.48mpg. Although the Irizar PB body has come on stream in the UK, the Century has a good reputation as a solid reliable coach. Although Doig's was initially unhappy with the back-up, that situation has improved.

Take a look around the interiors ...

► Continued on Page 36



BMC 850 Club, Silver Coach Lines



Iveco EuroRider C35/
Beulas El Mundo, Gardiner Bros



Bova Futura FHD 14-430XE
Magnum, Austin Travel



Enviro300, Mitchell's Coaches



Neoplan Starliner

Neoplan has always produced dramatic-looking coaches, and the Starliner is anything but a boring box on wheels. A symphony of glass and curves, it is probably one of the most exciting-looking coaches on the road today. And, as I found out at Longstaff's Coaches of Amble, it's a reliable and economical one, too. With a 420bhp Mercedes-Benz engine and a ZF ASTronic gearbox, it returns a steady 12mpg. The 8-speed gearbox is easy to use, and allows you to preselect gears. Longstaff's would buy another Starliner, but with an MAN rather than a Merc engine.

a symphony of glass and curves ...



Iveco Dailybus 50C13

Community minibuses are important to the lives of many people, and we went to Wokingham to test a 7m-long Daily of Keep Mobile, a voluntary, not for profit, organisation. The test bus, converted by Minibus Options, High Peak, can seat up to 16 passengers, but is typically configured for 11/12 passengers in fixed seats and two wheelchairs. It drives like a big car, and the Iveco 2.8-litre engine and ZF six-speed synchromesh box allow for good progress to be made. The test bus returned 26mpg. The only problems reported were with the plug door, and air-conditioning would be welcomed as a standard feature.

it drives like a big car ...



Scania L94UA/Wrightbus Solar Fusion

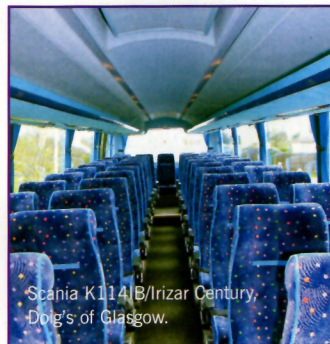
After the 7m-long Daily, the First Manchester 18m artic was a bit of a culture-shock. Used on the busy 135 service between Bury and Manchester, it had capacity for 150 passengers, 58 of them seated. The length proved to be virtually no problem, and the Scania drove like a 12m rigid. With a 260bhp Scania DC9 02 engine and ZF automatic gearbox, the Scania had power to spare. With artic becoming increasingly familiar around the UK, some operators regard buses like this as a safer and more practical alternative to double-deckers. Certainly, the solidly-built Wrightbus body offered an attractive travelling environment.

the Scania had power to spare ...

Take a look around the interiors ...



MAN 18.220/Alexander ALX300
Stagecoach Busways.



Scania K114B/Irizar Century,
Dogg's of Glasgow.



Neoplan Starliner N515SHD,
Longstaff's Coaches



Iveco DailyBus 50C13/
Minibus Options, Keep Mobile.



Volvo B12B/Van Hool Alizee

For years the Volvo/Van Hool combination was a sort of coaching Holy Grail, but that reputation was earned with the mid-engined B10M. How would the new rear-engined B12B compare? Very well, according to Volvo fans, Marbill Coach Services of Beith. After B58s and B10Ms Marbill has two B12Bs. The test coach, a 340bhp 49-seater with ZF automatic box, was a joy to drive, even in adverse weather and traffic conditions, and returns 8-11mpg. The B12B is selling well, alongside the mid-engined B12M that is still favoured by many significant customers, and the lighter B7R. With a solid Van Hool body, the B12B is an important contender.

a joy to drive ...



Irisbus Scolabus 24

Hardly the prettiest newcomer on the block, the four-square Scolabus is designed to provide robust and safe school transport. And that's what it does. We tested a no-frills 67-seater in Glossop, operated by Stagecoach Manchester for Greater Manchester PTE; it has a front-mounted Iveco Tector 240bhp engine and an Allison five-speed automatic box. Although the engine is at the front, noise is not intrusive, and the flexible engine coped well with the hilly Glossop terrain that is part of its daily duties. Forget the looks and you have a practical, sturdy (and at 14mpg, economical) school bus.

robust and safe school transport ...

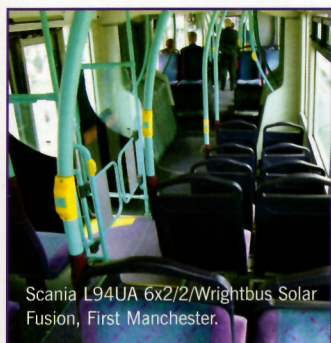


Irisbus Agora Line

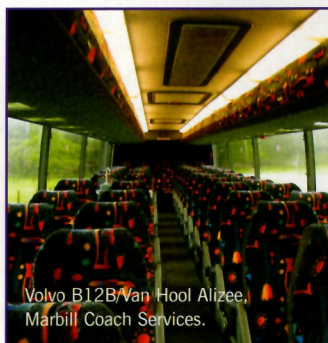
A model that has yet to make an impact in the UK, surprisingly, because it is an attractive low-floor 44-seater. Norfolk County Services uses seven on a Norwich park-and-ride contract, and although they were initially bought because they were readily available, NCS would happily consider more if it succeeds in winning more park-and-ride work. The Agora Line has a rear-mounted Iveco Cursor 8 245bhp engine and a ZF automatic box, and was a joy to drive and to travel in. It handled immaculately and felt solid. At 10,770kg it ranks with the heavier full-size single deckers and returned 6.3mpg

attractive 44-seater ...

Take a look around the interiors ...



Scania L94UA 6x2/2/Wrightbus Solar Fusion, First Manchester.



Volvo B12B/Van Hool Alizee, Marbill Coach Services.



Irisbus Scolabus 24/Vehixel, Greater Manchester PTE



Irisbus Agora Line, Norfolk County Services.

CHASSIS AND INTEGRALS

Make and model	Engine Position	Overall Length (m)	Wheelbase (m)	Engine	Cubic Capacity (litres)	Max Power (bhp)	Gearbox	Speeds	Fuel tank (litres)	Wheel/tire size	Brakes front/rear	Max GVW	Power/Weight ratio
AYATS (GB) Ayats (GB), Sunfun House, Meadow Drove, Earith, Cambridge PE28 3SA Tel 01487 843333 Fax 01487 740285													
Platinum	RV	10.2	6.0	MAN D0836	6.9	280	ZF S6-36	6 M	-	285/70R 19.5	Drum/Drum	-	-
Bravo	RV	12.0	6.0	MAN D2866	12.0	360	ZF 6HP600	5 A	-	315/80R 22.5	Disc/Drum	24t	15.0
Bravo	RV	12.0	6.0	MAN D2866	12.0	460	ZF 8S-180	8 M	-	315/80R 22.5	Disc/Drum	24t	19.2
Bravo Plus	RV	13.75	-	MAN D2866	12.0	460	ZF 8S-180	8 M	-	315/80R 22.5	Disc/Drum	26t	17.7
Atlantis	RV	12.0	6.15	MAN D2866	12.0	360	ZF 6HP600	5 A	-	-	-	18t	-
BMC (UK) BMC (UK) BMC House, Ibstock Road, Coventry CV6 6JR Tel 02476 363003 www.bmcukltd.com													
Probus coach	RV	8.5	4.2	Cummins ISBe	5.9	220	ZF 6S-90	6 M	190	245/70R 19.5	Disc/Disc	12t	18.3
Schoolbus 1100FE	FV	10.7	5.85	Cummins ISBe	3.9	150	Allison 2000	4 A	190	265/70R 19.5	Drum/Drum	12t	12.5
Falcon 1100	RV	11m	5.85	Cummins ISBe	3.9	185	Voith D854.3	4 A	200	275/70R 22.5	Disc/Drum	17t	10.9
Hawk	RV	8.5m	3.9	Cummins ISBe	3.9	135	Voith D854.3	4 A	190	245/70R 19.5	Disc/Disc	12t	11.3
BOVA Autobusfabriek BOVA BV, Postbus 5, 5550 AA Valkenswaard, Netherlands Tel 00 31 40 208 46 11 Fax 00 31 40 204 20 45 www.bova.nl													
Futura FHD10.340XE	RV	10	4.89	DAF XE	12.6	340	ZF 6S-1600 HGS	6 M	490	295/80R 22.5	Disc/Drum	18t	18.9
Futura FHD12.340XE	RV	12	6.09	DAF XE	12.6	340	ZF 6S-1600 HGS	6 M	745	295/80R 22.5	Disc/Drum	18t	18.9
Futura FHD12.380XE	RV	12	6.09	DAF XE	12.6	380	ZF 6S-1600 HGS	6 M	745	295/80R 22.5	Disc/Drum	18t	21.1
Futura FHD13.340XE	RV	12.7	6.8	DAF XE	12.6	340	ZF 6S-1600 HGS	6 M	745	295/80R 22.5	Disc/Drum	18t	18.9
Futura FHD13.380XE	RV	12.7	6.8	DAF XE	12.6	380	ZF 6S-1600 HGS	6 M	745	295/80R 22.5	Disc/Drum	18t	21.1
Futura FHD14.430XE	RV	13.58	6.09	DAF XE	12.6	430	ZF 8S-180 HGS	8 M	745	295/80R 22.5	Disc/Drum	24.45t	17.6
Futura FHD15.430XE	RV	15	6.8	DAF XE	12.6	430	ZF 8S-180 HGS	8 M	745	295/80R 22.5	Disc/Drum	24.45t	17.6
Magiq HD122.340.XE	RV	12.2	6.15	DAF XE	12.6	340	ZF 6S-1600 HGS	6 M	774	295/80R 22.5	Disc/Disc	18t	18.9
Magiq HD122.380.XE	RV	12.2	6.15	DAF XE	12.6	380	ZF 6S-1600 HGS	6 M	774	295/80R 22.5	Disc/Disc	18t	21.1
Coach distributors: Moseley (PCV), Moseley in the South, Moseley Distributors.													
DENNIS Dennis Chassis, Dennis Way, Guildford GU1 1AF Tel 01483 571271 Fax 01483 301697													
Mini Dart	RV	8.8	3.9	Cummins ISBe	3.9	135	Allison 2000	4 A	220	245/70R 19.5	Drum/Drum	11t	12.3
Dart SLF	RV	9.3	4.40	Cummins ISBe	3.9	135	Allison 2000	4 A	220	245/70R 19.5	Drum/Drum	11t	12.3
Dart SLF	RV	10.1	5.20	Cummins ISBe	3.9	135	Allison 2000	4 A	220	245/70R 19.5	Drum/Drum	11t	12.3
Dart SLF	RV	10.7	5.81	Cummins ISBe	3.9	150	Allison 2000	4 A	220	245/70R 19.5	Drum/Drum	11.5t	13.0
Super Dart	RV	11.4	5.95	Cummins ISBe	5.9	185	Allison T280	4 A	220	245/70R 19.5	Drum/Drum	13t	12.7
Super Dart gearbox options - Voith D851.3													
Enviro200	RV	10.4	5.52	Cummins ISBe	3.9	150	Voith DV500	3 A	245/70R 19.5*	Disc/Disc	12.9t	11.6	
Enviro200	RV	10.9	6.16	Cummins ISBe	3.9	150	Voith DV500	3 A	245/70R 19.5*	Disc/Disc	12.9t	11.6	
Enviro300	RV	12.0	6.17	Cummins ISBe	5.9	220	ZF 5HP502	5 A	250	265/70R 19.5	Disc/Disc	14.4t	15.3
Enviro300	RV	12.5	6.69	Cummins ISBe	5.9	220	ZF 5HP502	5 A	250	265/70R 19.5	Disc/Disc	14.4t	15.3
*Enviro200 rear wheels/tyres 315/60R 22.5; Enviro300 gearbox options - Allison T280, Voith D854.3, ZF 6HP502													
Trident	RV	9.9	5.25	Cummins ISCe	8.3	225	Voith D854.3	4 A	275	275/70R 22.5	Disc/Disc	18t	12.5
Trident	RV	10.5	5.80	Cummins ISCe	8.3	225	Voith D854.3	4 A	275	275/70R 22.5	Disc/Disc	18t	12.5
Trident	RV	10.6	5.95	Cummins ISCe	8.3	225	Voith D854.3	4 A	275	275/70R 22.5	Disc/Disc	18t	12.5
Trident	RV	11.4	6.63	Cummins ISCe	8.3	225	Voith D854.3	4 A	275	275/70R 22.5	Disc/Disc	18t	12.5
Trident engine option - 260bhp rating. Gearbox options - ZF 4HP 502, 5HP 502													
Javelin	UV	12.0	6.25	Cummins ISCe	8.3	245	ZF S6-85	6 M	434	275/80R 22.5	Disc/Drum	18t	13.6
R300	RV	12.0	6.20	Cummins ISCe	8.3	300	ZF6S-1600	6 M	450	295/80R 22.5	Disc/Disc	18t	16.7
R345	RV	12.0	6.20	Cummins ISMe	11.0	345	ZF6S-1600	6 M	450	295/80R 22.5	Disc/Disc	18t	19.2
R420	RV	12.0	6.20	Cummins ISMe	11.0	420	ZF ASTronic	10 M	450	295/80R 22.5	Disc/Disc	18t	23.3
Coach distributors: Salvador Caetano (UK), Plaxton Coach Sales													
IRISBUS (UK) Iveco House, Station Road, Watford WD17 1SR Tel 01923 259660 Fax 01923 259623 www.irisbus.co.uk													
Agora Line	RV	12.0	6.12	Iveco Cursor 8	7.8	245	ZF 4HP502	4 A	250	275/70R 22.5	Disc/Disc	18t	13.6
DailyBus 50C 13	FV	6.4	3.75	Iveco 8140.43S	2.8	125	ZF S6-300	6 M	90	195/75R 16	Disc/Disc	5.4t	23.1
DailyBus 50C 13	FV	7.2	4.35	Iveco 8140.43S	2.8	125	ZF S6-300	6 M	90	195/75R 16	Disc/Disc	5.4t	23.1
DailyBus 65C 15	FV	7.2	4.35	Iveco 8140.43N	2.8	146	ZF S6-300	6 M	90	225/75R 16	Disc/Disc	6.5t	22.5
DailyBus 65C 15	FV	8.1	4.75	Iveco 8140.43N	2.8	146	ZF S6-300	6 M	90	225/75R 16	Disc/Disc	6.5t	22.5
Daily Logo	FV	8.5	5.04	Iveco 8140.43N	2.8	146	ZF S6-300	6 M	-	225/75R 16	Disc/Disc	7t	20.9
Scolabus 24	FV	12.0	6.57	Iveco Tector F4A	5.9	240	Allison MD3060	6 A	280	295/70R 19.5	Disc/Drum	15t	16.0
EuroMidi	FV	8.4	4.63	Iveco Tector F4A	5.9	210	Iveco 2855.6	6 M	200	225/75R 17.5	Disc/Disc	10t	21.0
MidiRider coach	RV	9.8	4.32	Iveco Tector F4A	5.9	264	ZF S6-85	6 M	200	265/70R 19.5	Disc/Drum	-	-
EuroRider	RV	12.0	6.15	Iveco Cursor 8	7.8	352	ZF 6S-1600	6M	467	295/70R 22.5	Disc/Drum	18t	19.5
Gearbox option - EuroRider ZF 5HP592 automatic													
Coach distributors: Plaxton Coach Sales, UK Coach & Bus													
MAN MAN ERF UK Ltd, Frankland Road, Blagrove, Swindon SN5 8YU Tel 01793 490231 Fax 01793 485260 www.man.co.uk													
Bus													
12.220 NL	RV	10.7	5.2	MAN D0826	6.9	220	Voith D851.3	4 A	150	265/70R 19.5	Disc/Drum	12t	18.3
14.220 NL	RV	11.3	5.8	MAN D0826	6.9	220	Voith D851.3	4 A	150	265/70R 19.5	Disc/Drum	14t	15.7
Gearbox option - ZF 4HP502													
18.220 NL	RV	12.0	5.88	MAN D0826	6.9	220	Voith D851.3	3 A	300	275/70R 22.5	Drum/Drum	18t	12.2
Coach													
12.220	RV	10.0	4.7	MAN D0826	6.9	220	ZF S6-36	6 M	150	255/70R 22.5	Drum/Drum	12.8t	17.2
14.280	RV	11.5	-	MAN D0836	6.9	280	ZF S6-1600	6 M	-	285/70R 19.5	Disc/Drum	14t	20.0
18.310	RV	12.0	-	MAN D2866	12.0	310	ZF S6-85	6 M	235	295/80R 22.5	Disc/Disc	18.2t	17.2
18.360	RV	12.0	-	MAN D2866	12.0	360	ZF S6-85	6 M	235	295/80R 22.5	Disc/Disc	18.2t	20.0
24.410	RV	12.0	5.35	MAN D2866	12.0	410	ZF 8S-180	8 M	-	315/80R 22.5	Drum/Drum	24t	17.1
Coach distributors: BASE, Mentor Coach & Bus, Salvador Caetano (UK)													
MERCEDES-BENZ EvoBus (UK) Ltd, Ashcroft Way, Crosspoint Business Park, Coventry CV2 2SR Tel 02476 626000 Fax 02476 626006 www.evobus.co.uk													
Vario 0814D	FV	6.94	4.25	Mercedes OM904LA	4.25	136	ZF 5S-42	5 M	125	205/75R 17.5	Disc/Disc	7.5t	18.1
Vario 0814D	FV	7.49	4.80	Mercedes OM904LA	4.25	136	ZF 5S-42	5 M	125	205/75R 17.5	Disc/Disc	7.5t	18.1
Engine option - 152 bhp rating in 0815D. Gearbox option - Allison AT542 automatic													
OC500 Touro	RH	12.0	6.25	Mercedes OM457HLA	12.0	354	Mercedes G190	6 M	400	295/80R 22.5	Disc/Disc	18t	19.7
Gearbox option - ZF 5HP602 automatic													
Citaro 0.530	RH	12.0	5.85	Mercedes OM906HLA	6.4	231	ZF 5HP502	5 A	300	275/70R 22.5	Disc/Disc	-	-
Citaro 0.530G	RV	18.0	-	Mercedes OM906HLA	6.4	279	ZF 5HP502	5 A	300	275/70R 22.5	Disc/Disc	28t	9.9
Gearbox option - Voith four-speed automatic													
Atego 12.23L	FV	9.95	4.84	Mercedes OM906LA	6.4	230	Mercedes G85	6 M	210	265/70R 19.5	Disc/Disc	12t	19.2

CHASSIS AND INTEGRALS

Make and model	Engine Position	Overall Length (m)	Wheelbase (m)	Engine	Cubic Capacity (litres)	Max Power (bhp)	Gearbox	Speeds	Fuel tank (litres)	Wheel/tyre size	Brakes front/rear	Max GVW	Power/Weight ratio
NEOPLAN integral Mentor Coach & Bus, Euroway Estate, Hellaby, Rotherham S66 8QL Tel 01709 700600 Fax 01709 700007 www.mentorplc.com													
Euroliner N313SHD	RV	10.6	5.2	Mercedes OM441LA	11.9	290	ZF6S-1600	6 M	425	295/80R 22.5	Disc/Disc	18t	16.1
Euroliner N316SHD	RV	12.0	5.8	Mercedes OM441LA	11.9	340	ZF 6S-1600	6 M	425	295/80R 22.5	Disc/Disc	18t	18.9
Euroliner N316SHDL	RV	13.7	6.35	MAN D2860	11.9	410	ZF ASTronic	12 M	425	295/80R 22.5	Disc/Disc	26t	15.8
Starliner N516SHD	RV	12.0	5.55	Mercedes OM402LA	12.8	381	ZF 8S-180C	8 M	425	295/80R 22.5	Disc/Disc	25.5t	14.9
Starliner N516SHDL	RV	13.9	6.35	MAN D2860	11.9	410	ZF 8S-180C	8 M	460	295/80R 22.5	Disc/Disc	26t	15.8
Engine option - 460bhp rating. Gearbox option - ZF ASTronic													
Skyliner N122/3 dd	RV	12.0	5.55	Mercedes OM402LA	12.8	381	ZF 8S - 180C	8 M	620	295/80R 22.5	Disc/Disc	25.5t	14.9
Skyliner N122/3 dd	RV	12.0	5.55	MAN D2866	11.9	400	ZF 8S - 180C	8 M	620	295/80R 22.5	Disc/Disc	25.5t	15.7
Skyliner N122/3L dd	RV	13.7	5.55	MAN D2876	11.9	460	ZF ASTronic	12 M	620	295/80R 22.5	Disc/Disc	26t	17.7
OPTARE integral Optare Ltd, Manston Lane, Leeds LS15 8SU Tel 0113 264 5182 Fax 0113 260 6635 www.optare.com													
Alero AL01-4	FV	7.2	4.8	Iveco 8140.43	2.8	125	ZF6S-300	6M	70/120	205/75R 17.5	Disc/Disc	6t	
Gearbox Option - ZF4HP22, four speed automatic													
Solo M780	RV	7.8	4.83	Mercedes OM904LA	4.25	122	Allison 2000	5 A	200	215/175R 17.5	Disc/Disc	10.5t	11.6
Solo M850	RV	8.5	5.53	Mercedes OM904LA	4.25	122	Allison 2000	5 A	200	215/175R 17.5	Disc/Disc	10.5t	11.6
Solo M920	RV	9.2	6.23	Mercedes OM904LA	4.25	122	Allison 2000	5 A	200	215/175R 17.5	Disc/Disc	10.5t	11.6
Solo M990	RV	9.9	6.93	Mercedes OM904LA	4.25	122	Allison 2000	5 A	200	215/175R 17.5	Disc/Disc	10.5t	11.6
Engine option - Mercedes 147bhp; Cummins ISBe 185bhp													
Tempo X1060	RV	10.57	4.95	Mercedes OM904LA	6.4	241	ZF6HP500	6 A	200	275/70R 22.5	Drum/Drum	17.0t	14.2
Tempo X1130	RV	11.28	5.66	Mercedes OM904LA	6.4	241	ZF6HP500	6 A	200	275/70R 22.5	Drum/Drum	17.0t	14.2
Tempo X1200	RV	11.99	6.37	Mercedes OM904LA	6.4	241	ZF6HP500	6 A	200	275/70R 22.5	Drum/Drum	17.0t	14.2
Tempo X1260	RV	12.60	6.99	Mercedes OM904LA	6.4	241	ZF6HP500	6 A	200	275/70R 22.5	Drum/Drum	17.0t	14.2
Engine option - Mercedes 275bhp. Gearbox option: Allison T310R five speed automatic													
SCANIA Scania Bus and Coach UK Ltd, Claylands Avenue, Worsop S81 7DJ Tel 01909 500822 Fax 01909 500165 www.scania.com													
K94IB 4x2	RV	12.0	5.83	Scania DC 902	9.0	260	Scania GR801R CS	7 M	465	315/80R 22.5	Disc	19.5t	13.3
(S-kool Coach only)	RV	12.0	5.83	Scania DC 903	9.0	300	ZF 5HP592C N	5 A	465	315/80R 22.5	Disc	19.5t	15.4
K114EB/IB 4x2	RV	12.0	5.83	Scania DC 1104	10.6	340	Scania GR801R CS/OC	7/8 M	465	315/80R 22.5	Disc	19.5t	17.4
K114EB 4x2	RV	12.2	6.13	Scania DC 1104	10.6	380	Scania GR801R CS/OC	7/8 M	465	315/80R 22.5	Disc	19.5t	19.5
K114EB/IB 6x2	RV	12.0	6.85	Scania DC 1104	10.6	340	Scania GR801R CS/OC	7/8 M	546	315/80R 22.5	Disc/Disc	25.0t	15.2
Gearbox option - ZF5HP602 automatic on K114													
K114EB 6x2*4	RV	13.5	8.15	Scania DC 1104	10.6	380	ZF 5HP602C HT	5 A	610	315/80R 22.5	Disc	26.5t	14.3
K124EB/IB 4x2	RV	12.0	5.83	Scania DC 1202	12.0	420	Scania GR801R CS/OC	7/8 M	465	315/80R 22.5	Disc	19.5t	21.5
K124EB 6x2	RV	12.0	7.02	Scania DC 1202	12.0	420	Scania GR801R CS/OC	7/8 M	465	315/80R 22.5	Disc/Disc/Drum	25.0t	21.5
K124EB 6x2*4	RV	12.8	7.24	Scania DC 1202	12.0	420	Scania GR801R CS/OC	8 M	465	315/80R 22.5	Disc	26.5t	14.3
K124EB 6x2*4	RV	13.5	8.15	Scania DC 1202	12.0	420	Scania GR801R CS/OC	8 M	610	315/80R 22.5	Disc	26.5t	14.3
L94UB 4x2	RV	12.0	6.0	Scania DC 901	9.0	230	ZF 5HP502C NBS	5 A	290	275/70R 22.5	Disc	19.1t	12.1
L94UA 6x2/2	RV	18.0	-	Scania DC 902	9.0	260	ZF 5HP592C NBS	5 A	345	275/70R 22.5	Disc	28.6t	9.1
N94UB 4x2	RV	10.6	5.3	Scania DC 901	9.0	230	ZF 5HP502C NBS	5 A	365	275/70R 22.5	Disc	19.1t	12.1
N94UD 4x2	RV	10.6	5.3	Scania DC 902	9.0	260	ZF 5HP592C NBS	5 A	260	275/70R 22.5	Disc	19.1t	13.6
N94UD 4x2	RV	12.0	6.0	Scania DC 902	9.0	260	ZF 5HP592C NBS	5 A	260	275/70R 22.5	Disc	19.1t	13.6
CN94UB 4x2 Omni City	RV	12.0	6.0	Scania DC 901	9.0	230	ZF 5HP502C NBS	5 A	300	275/70R 22.5	Disc	19.1t	12.1
CN94UB 6x2/2 Omni City	RV	18.0	-	Scania DC 902	9.0	260	ZF 5HP592C NBS	5 A	300	275/70R 22.5	Disc	28.6t	9.1
SETRA integral EvoBus (UK) Ltd, Ashcroft Way, Crosspoint Business Park, Coventry CV2 2SR. Tel 02476 626000 Fax 02476 626006 www.evobus.co.uk													
S315 GT HD	RV	12.0	6.08	Mercedes OM457LA	12.0	422	Mercedes GO190	6M	535	295/80R 22.5	Disc/Drum	-	-
S315 GT HD	RV	12.0	6.08	Mercedes OM457LA	12.0	422	ZF ASTronic	10 M	535	295/80R 22.5	Disc/Drum	-	-
S415 GT	RV	12.0	6.08	Mercedes OM457LA	12.0	422	Mercedes GO190	6M	570	295/80R 22.5	Disc/Disc	-	-
TOYOTA Toyota GB plc, Great Burgh, Burgh Heath, Epsom, Surrey KT18 5UX Tel 01737 363633 Fax 01737 367730													
Optimo V	FV	7.6	3.94	Toyota 15 B FTE	4.1	135	Toyota	6 M	-	205/75R 17.5	Disc/Drum	6.7t	21.4
Coach distributors: A&D Coach Sales, Salvador Caetano UK, Holloway Commercial													
VAN HOOL Van Hool NV, Bernard Van Hoolstraat 58, B-2500 Lier, Belgium Tel 00 32 3 420 20 20 Fax 00 32 3 482 33 60 www.vanhool.be													
T917 Astron	RV	13.85	6.7	MAN D2866	12.0	460	ZF ASTronic	12 M	735	315/80R 22.5	Disc/Disc	-	-
VDL BUS Arriva Bus & Coach, Lodge Garage, Whitehall Road West, Gomersal, Cleckheaton BD19 4BJ Tel 01274 681144 Fax 01274 651198													
DB250 RS	RV	9.9	5.05	DAF PE183C	9.2	218	Voith D851.3	3 A	300	275/70R 22.5	Drum/Drum	17.4t	12.5
DB250 RS	RV	10.3	5.45	DAF PE183C	9.2	218	Voith D851.3	3 A	300	275/70R 22.5	Drum/Drum	17.4t	12.5
Engine option - 249bhp rating. Gearbox options - ZF 4HP500, 5HP500, Voith D854.3													
SB120	RV	9.4	4.3	Cummins ISBe	3.9	135	Allison AT545	4 A	250	245/70R 19.5	Disc/Disc	11.5t	11.7
SB120	RV	10.2	5.2	Cummins ISBe	3.9	135	Allison AT545	4 A	250	245/70R 19.5	Disc/Disc	11.5t	11.7
SB120	RV	10.8	5.8	Cummins ISBe	3.9	150	Allison AT545	4 A	250	245/70R 19.5	Disc/Disc	11.5t	13.0
SB200	RV	11.8	6.0	Cummins ISBe	5.9	185	Voith D851.3	4 A	250	265/70R 19.5	Disc/Disc	14.4t	12.8
SB4000PF	RV	12.0		DAF PE228C	9.2	310	ZF 5HP592	5 A	430	295/80R 22.5	Disc/Disc	18t	17.2
SB4000XF	RV	12.0		DAF XE250C	12.6	340	ZF 5HP602	5 A	430	295/80R 22.5	Disc/Disc	18t	18.9
SB4000+ 3 axle	RV	12.0+		DAF XE250C	12.6	350	ZF 5HP602	5 A		195/80R 22.5	Disc/Disc	24t	14.6
VOLVO Volvo Bus Ltd, Wedgcock Lane, Warwick CV34 5YA Tel 01926 401777 Fax 01926 407407 www.volvobuses.volvo.co.uk													
B7R	RV	12.0	6.30	Volvo D7C	7.3	275	ZF 6HP550	6 A	300	295/80R 22.5	Disc/Disc	18t	15.3
Engine option - 290bhp rating. Gearbox option - Volvo EGS													
B7TL dd	RV	9.8	5.2	Volvo D7C	7.3	215	ZF 5HP502	5 A	270	275/70R 22.5	Disc/Drum	18t	11.9
B7TL dd	RV	10.3	5.7	Volvo D7C	7.3	215	ZF 5HP502	5 A	270	275/70R 22.5	Disc/Drum	18t	11.9
Engine option - 250bhp rating. Gearbox option - Voith D863.3													
B9TL 3-axle dd	RV	12.0+		Volvo D9C	9	340	ZF 6HP592	6 A	-	275/70R 22.5	Disc/Drum	23t	14.8
B7L sd	RV	12.0	6.0	Volvo D7C	7.3	215	ZF 5HP502	5 A	-	275/70R 22.5	Disc/Drum	18t	11.9
Engine option - 250bhp rating.													
B7LA	RV	18.0		Volvo D7C	7.3	275	ZF 5HP592	5 A		275/70R 22.5	Disc/Drum	28t	9.8
B7RLE	RV	12.0		Volvo D7C	7.3	275	ZF 5HP502	5 A	270	275/70R 22.5	Disc/Drum	18.9t	11.9
Merit	RV	10.8	5.8	Cummins ISBe	3.9	150	Allison AT545	4 A	250	245/70R 19.5	Disc/Disc	11.5t	13.0
B12M	UH	12.0	6.20	Volvo DH12D	12.1	340	ZF6S-1600	6 M	450	315/80R 22.5	Disc/Disc	18t	18.9
B12B	RH	12.0		Volvo DH12D	12.1	340	Volvo EGS-V/VR	8 M	600	295/80R 22.5	Disc/Disc	18t	18.9
B12B 3 axle	RH	13.7		Volvo DH12D	12.1	340	Volvo EGS-V/VR	8 M	600	295/80R 22.5	Disc/Disc	24t	14.2
Engine options - 380 and 420bhp ratings. Gearbox options - ZF 5HP602 (B12M and B12B 340); Volvo I-Shift (B12M, B12B)													
Coach distributors: Salvador Caetano (UK), Moseley (PCV), Moseley in the South, Moseley Distributors, Plaxton Coach Sales, Volvo Coach Sales													

BODIES

Manufacturer
and model

Structure

Nominal
Length

Body Type

Chassis
availability

ALEXANDER Alexander Dennis, 91 Glasgow Road, Falkirk FK1 4JB Tel 01324 621672 Fax 01324 632469

Pointer 2	Aluminium	8.8-11.4m	LF Midi	Dennis Dart SLF
ALX400	Aluminium	10.5m	LF DD	VDL DB250LF, Dennis Trident, Volvo B7TL

BERKHOF VDL Berkhof Valkenswaard, PO Box 585, 5550 AN Valkenswaard, De Vest 55, 5555 XP Valkenswaard, The Netherlands Tel 00 31 40 208 2424 Fax 00 31 40 208 2425 www.vdlberkhof.com

Axial 50	Steel	12m	3.55m coach	Volvo B12M, B12B
Axial 70	Steel	12m	3.7m coach	Volvo B12M, B12B
Axial 100	Steel	12-13.5m	4m DD coach	Scania K114, K124, Volvo B12B

Coach Distributor: Volvo Coach Sales, Scania Bus and Coach UK

BEULAS UK Coach & Bus, Sandbeck Way, Hellaby, Rotherham S66 8QL Tel 01709 705570 Fax 01709 705569 www.uk-cb.com

Midi-Star	Steel	9.8m	3.4m coach	Iveco MidiRider
Stergo E	Steel	12m	3.56m coach	Iveco EuroRider
El Mundo	Steel	12m	3.8m coach	Iveco EuroRider

CAETANO Salvador Caetano (UK) Ltd, Mill Lane, Heather, Leicestershire LE67 2QE Tel 01530 263333 Fax 01530 263379 www.caetano.co.uk

Optimo V	Steel	7.5m	Midicoach	Toyota
Enigma	Steel	9.8m	3.2m coach	MAN 14.280
Enigma	Steel	12m	3.5m coach	Dennis R410, Volvo B12B, MAN 18.310

EAST LANCs East Lancashire Coachbuilders Ltd, Lower Phillips Road, Whitebirk Industrial Estate, Blackburn BB1 5UD, Tel 01254 504150 Fax 01254 504181 www.elcb.co.uk

Mylennium	Alusuisse	8.8-12m	LF SD	Dennis Dart, MAN 14.220, Scania N94
Lolyne	Alusuisse	10.0-10.5m	LF DD	Dennis Trident
Vyking	Alusuisse	10.0-10.5m	LF DD	Volvo B7TL
Mylennium LowLander	Alusuisse	10.3-12m	LF DD	VDL Bus DB250
OmniDekka	Alusuisse	10.6-12m	LF DD	Scania N94

EURO COACHBUILDERS Derrybeg Industrial Estate, Gweedore, Co Donegal, Ireland Tel 00 353 75 31528 Fax 00 353 75 31930 www.eurocoachbuilders.ie

LX	Steel	8.3m	Midicoach	Mercedes Vario
V29/Pantera	Steel	8.3m	Midicoach	Mercedes Vario
Clady	Steel	10.3m	Coach	Mercedes Atego 1223L
School Bus	Steel	10.3m	SD	Mercedes Atego 1223L
E Lancs Mylennium	Aluminium	8.8m	LF SD	TransBus Dart

Coach Distributor: Taylors PCV Sales

HISPANO Volvo Bus Ltd, Wedgcock Lane, Warwick CV34 5YA Tel 01926 401777 Fax 01926 407407 www.volvobuses.volvo.co.uk

Habit	S'less Steel	12-18m	LF SD	Volvo B7L, B7LA
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INDCAR UK Coach & Bus, Sandbeck Way, Hellaby, Rotherham S66 8QL Tel 01709 705570 Fax 01709 705569 www.uk-cb.com

Maxim 2	Steel	8.4m	Midicoach	Iveco EuroMidi
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IRIZAR Scania Bus and Coach UK Ltd, Claylands Avenue, Worksop S81 7DJ Tel 01909 500822 Fax 01909 500165

Capacity	Steel	12m	3.5m coach	Scania K114
Intercentury	Steel	12m	3.2m coach	Scania K114
Century	Steel	12m	3.5m coach	Scania K114
Century	Steel	12m	3.7m coach	Scania K124
PB	Steel	12.2m	3.5m coach	Scania K124
S-Kool	Steel	12m	3.2m school coach	Scania K94

JONCKHEERE Volvo Coach Sales, Brisco Avenue, Loughborough LE11 5HP Tel 01509 217777 Fax 01509 260978 www.jonckheere.be

Mistral 30	Steel	12m	3.2m coach	Volvo B7R
Mistral 50	Steel	12m	3.5m coach	Volvo B12M, B12B
Mistral 70	Steel	13.7m	3.7m coach	Volvo B12B

BODY TYPES: DD DOUBLE-DECK; SD CONVENTIONAL SINGLE-DECK, LF LOW-FLOOR



BODIES

Manufacturer
and model

Structure

Nominal
Length

Body Type

Chassis
availability

MARCOPOLO

BASE, Sandy Way, Holmeswood, Ormskirk, Lancashire L40 1UB
Tel 01254 685599 www.basecoachsales.co.uk

Viaggio 330	Steel	9.9m	3.3m coach	MAN 12.220
Viaggio 330	Steel	12m	3.5m coach	MAN 18.310, VDL Bus SB4000
Viaggio 350	Steel	12m	3.5m coach	MAN 18.310, 18.360, VDL Bus SB4000
Viaggio 370	Steel	12m	3.7m coach	MAN 24.410

MCV

MCV Bus and Coach, Stirling Place, Elean Business Park, Sutton, Ely CB6 2QE
Tel 01353 773000 Fax 01353 773001

Evolution	S'less steel	9.8-10.2m	LF SD	MAN 12.220
Evolution	S'less steel	11.2m	LF SD	MAN 14.220

NOGE

Mentor Coach & Bus, Euroway Estate, Hellaby, Rotherham S66 8QL
Tel 01709 700600 Fax 01709 700007 www.mentorplc.com

Catalan 320	Steel	10m	3.2m midi-coach	MAN 13.220
Catalan 350	Steel	12m	3.5m coach	MAN 18.310, 18.350
Catalan 370	Steel	12m	3.7m coach	MAN 24.410

OPTARE

Optare Ltd, Manston Lane, Leeds LS15 8SU
Tel 0113 264 5182 Fax 0113 260 6635 www.optare.com

Bonito	Steel	6.7m	Minicoach	Ford Transit FT 350EL
Soroco	Steel	6.5m	Minicoach	Mercedes Benz Sprinter
Soroco Plus	Steel	7.7m	MidiCoach	Mercedes Benz Sprinter
Nouvelle	Steel	8.4m	MidiCoach	Mercedes Benz Vario
Solera Corta	Steel	8.3m	Coach	Mercedes Benz Atego 12.23L
Solera SR	Steel	9.95m	Coach	Mercedes Benz Atego 12.23L

Coach distributors: AWCS, Bob Vale, Holloway Commercials, Yorks.

PLAXTON

Plaxton, Eastfield, Scarborough YO11 3BY
Tel: 01723 581500 Fax: 01723 581328

Beaver 2	Steel	7.8-8.5m	Midi	Mercedes Vario
Cheetah	Steel	8.5m	Midicoach	Mercedes Vario
Profile	Steel	12m	3.2m coach	Dennis Javelin, Volvo B7R
Paragon	S'less Steel	12m	3.5m coach	Volvo B12M, B12B, Dennis R, Iveco Eurorider
Panther	S'less Steel	12m	3.5m coach	Volvo B12M, B12B, Dennis R, Iveco Eurorider

Coach distributors: Plaxton Coach Sales, Volvo Coach Sales

SC COACHBUILDERS

SC Coachbuilders, Hambledon Road, Waterlooville, Hampshire PO7 7UA
Tel: 01705 258211 Fax 01705 255611 www.caetano.co.uk

Nimbus	Aluminium	8.8-11.4m	LF Midi	Dennis Dart
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SITCAR

Moseley (PCV) Ltd, Elmsall Way, Dale Lane, South Elmsall, Pontefract, West Yorkshire WF9 2XS
Tel 01977 609000 Fax 01977 609900 www.moseleycoachsales.co.uk

Beluga	Steel	8.3-8.5m	Midicoach	Mercedes Vario
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SUNSUNDEGUI

Volvo Coach Sales, Brisco Avenue, Loughborough LE11 5HP
Tel 01509 217777 Fax 01509 260978 www.volvobuses.volvo.co.uk

Sideral	Steel	12m	3.2m coach	Volvo B7R
Sideral	Steel	12m	3.5m coach	Volvo B12M, B12B

VAN HOOL

Van Hool NV, Bernard Van Hoolstraat 58, B-2500 Lier, Belgium
Tel 00 32 3 420 20 20 Fax 00 32 3 482 33 60 www.vanhool.be

Alizee	Steel	12m	3.47m coach	VDL Bus SB4000, Scania K114/K124, Volvo B12M, B12B
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Coach distributors: Arriva Bus & Coach, Moseley, Scania Bus & Coach

WRIGHTBUS

Wrightbus Ltd, Galgorm Industrial Estate, Fenaghy Road, Ballymena BT42 1PY
Tel 02825 641212 Fax 02825 649703 www.wright-bus.com

Cadet	Aluminique	9.4-10.8	LF Midi	VDL Bus SB120
Commander	Toggled Aluminium	11.8m	LF SD	VDL Bus SB200
Solar		12m	LF SD	Scania L94UB
Solar Fusion		18m	LF artic	Scania L94UA
Eclipse Metro		12m	LF SD	Volvo B7L
Eclipse Urban		12m	LF SD	Volvo B7RLE
Eclipse Commuter		12m	SD	Volvo B7RLE
Eclipse Fusion		18m	LF artic	Volvo B7LA
Eclipse Gemini		10.1-10.6m	LF DD	Volvo B7TL
Pulsar Gemini		10.3m	LF DD	VDL Bus DB250

MAN ERF UK Ltd
(Bus & Coach
Division)

01793 448000

www.man.co.uk



A new Plaxton Profile B7R for Amvale of Grimsby has been ordered with two sets of seats. For most of the year it is a 70-seater, used for school contracts and hires. But during the summer school holidays the 70 seats are removed and the coach is fitted with 53 reclining seats. Dual-tracking in the floor makes the conversion straightforward.



Go North East has secured the contract for a new high-frequency circular service at the expanded MetroCentre shopping and leisure complex in Gateshead. The service is funded by the MetroCentre and is operated by four new Optare Solos, painted in orange, green, yellow and blue to represent the four shopping zones of the centre.



Six Volvo B7TLs with 77-seat East Lancs Millennium bodies bring to 15 the number of Volvo's new-generation double-decker in service with Lincolnshire RoadCar. "The B7TLs are highly reliable buses – it's as simple as that," says RoadCar engineering director Derek Bradley. The new Volvos are being used to expand InterConnect services in Lincolnshire.



Neal's Travel of Isleham, Cambridgeshire, is no stranger to Mercedes-Benz products, with long experience of running small Mercedes coaches. And now it has chosen Mercedes-Benz for its front-line full-size fleet, with a new Touro. "We run a modern fleet," says Neal's director Bridget Paterson, "and aim to invest in vehicles which provide our customers with comfort and reliability."



The West Yorkshire Passenger PTE has expanded its Metro Connect network with a new service from Bradford to Leeds-Bradford International Airport. Using three long-wheelbase Cummins-engined Optare Solos, the 737 service provides a half-hourly link to the airport. The Solos are owned by the PTE, but are serviced and operated by Pegasus Coaches of Guiseley.



Dodsworths Coaches in Boroughbridge says that drivers enjoy the flexibility offered by the company's new Plaxton-bodied Volvo B12B fitted with I-Shift transmission, using the manual option for urban driving, while switching to automatic on motorways and trunk roads. "The drivers like the choice of manual or automatic gear change and use both depending upon the conditions," says John Dodsworth.



Prentice Coaches of Haddington, East Lothian, has taken delivery of this new Mercedes-Benz Vario with 28-seat Esker body. The specification includes a radio and CD player, public address system, luggage racks with mahogany edges, forced air ventilation, reading lights, and a mahogany dashboard kit. It was supplied by Harry Ferguson Sales.



Carlisle-based Irving's Coach Hire has taken delivery of a Bova Futura FHD 12.340XE coach finished in its distinctive orange, blue and white livery. The 12m coach has 53 seats, air-conditioning and additional marker lights at front and rear.

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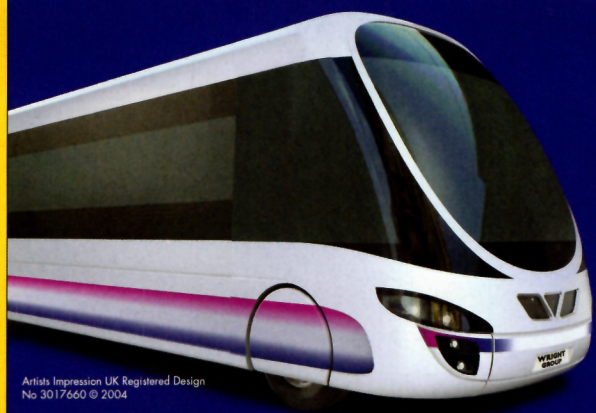
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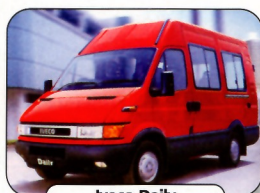
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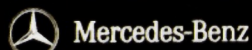
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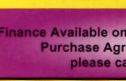
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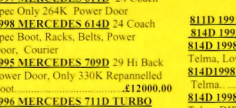
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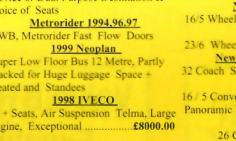
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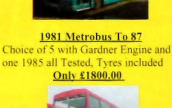
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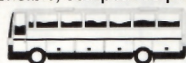
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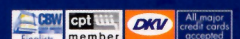
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That the bus industry is full of characters is something there can be little doubt about. And in a new little book, *Characters of the Bus Industry*, the Omnibus Society has homed in on 19 industry figures down the years.

The book has been published to mark the Society's 75th anniversary, and the figures cover that period and include such luminaries as Lord Ashfield and Frank Pick of London Transport.

But it's not all names from the distant past and many readers will no doubt turn straight to the pages of present-day characters. These include Moir Lockhead, whose "stocky physique contributes towards his reputation as the personification of post-privatisation macho management", and Brian Souter, a man whom it is hard to visualise pursuing a career as staid as accountancy, but that is where he started out.

Among current managers, Trent's Brian King features, and there are also names from the recent past such as Geoffrey Hilditch, latterly of Drawlane, and Werner Heubeck who was at the helm of Ulsterbus during what were its most difficult years.

Then there are some big names

from transport history, such as R Stuart Pilcher, who managed Manchester Corporation's transport operation from 1929 to 1946 with considerable flair and an eye for marketing, even if the term wasn't around at that time, and Donald Sinclair, who famously worked on innovative bus designs at Midland Red including an integral single-decker as long ago as 1946, and high-speed motorway coaches in 1959. Sinclair was at that time proposing the use of coaches which were 13.7m long (at a time when the length limit was just 30ft) – a man truly ahead of his time.

Another great innovator was Norman Morton, general manager of Sunderland Corporation Transport, who hit the transport headlines in the 1960s when he unveiled a visionary plan to convert the town's entire bus network to high-capacity one-man-operated single-deckers with a flat fare, payable by token. It was an ambitious scheme, and was not an unqualified success. Morton resigned in what seems to have been a messy political battle.

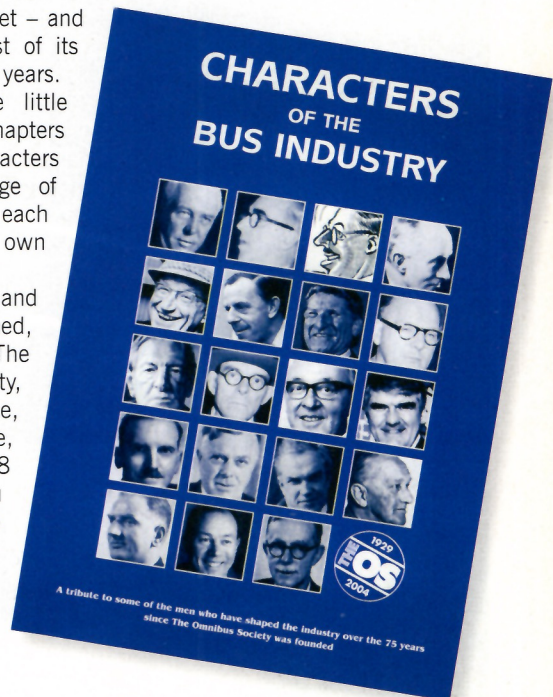
One unexpected name is Charles W Baroth who merits inclusion on the strength of his performance in reviving Salford's

ailing municipal bus fleet just after World War II. Municipal bus managers are sometimes characterised as staid or unimaginative but Baroth – and others in this book – show a remarkable grasp of concepts like branding and promotion at a time when such ideas were alien to an industry enjoying either growth or, at least, stability. Baroth introduced a new look for the Salford bus fleet – and also replaced most of its buses in just three years.

This is a nice little book, with the chapters on the 19 characters written by a range of different authors each bringing their own insights.

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► At a time when demands for value and quality are greater than ever, it comes as no surprise that the Mercedes Benz Citaro continues to outperform its rivals.

From the stylish exterior to the efficient Euro III Engine, Europe's favourite single deck citybus offers everything you would expect from one of the World's premier brands.

Exceptional reliability and long service

intervals ensure the Citaro spends more time in service – not in for service – a huge financial benefit, regardless of your fleet size!

In addition, high resale values give you the confidence to purchase a new Mercedes Benz Citaro as an investment that is quickly realised.

"The Citaro represented the best saving we've ever made! We would look no further than the

Citaro as we continue to strengthen our fleet"

Mr P. Worth, Director, Worth's Motor Services Limited.

Contact EvoBus on 02476 626000 and ask for Kate Dodds.



Mercedes-Benz

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